

Celebrex: On-going trials with COX2 inhibitors

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Some data from one of two cancer studies indicated an increased risk of cardiovascular problems in patients taking Celebrex, Pfizer announced on December 17, 2004. The second study showed no increase. This report is not totally unexpected.

Vioxx was pulled from the market in September. Subsequently, an advisory on Bextra, another COX2 NSAID, came out, and on December 17, Pfizer released the information about Celebrex. As this article is being written, Pfizer has said they have no plans to withdraw Celebrex from the market at the present time, and will review the studies in question and keep physicians, patients and others informed of its findings. .

We hope that people taking Celebrex will not panic. The data is still preliminary and the two studies present different findings.

It's important to keep in mind that prescription drugs have potential side effects. People with arthritis are often on multiple medications, some with pages of reported adverse reactions. Taking medication is always a trade off of possible benefit against potential risk. It's acknowledged that traditional NSAIDS put patients at higher risk for GI bleeds, and that COX2 inhibitors carry less risk of gastrointestinal problems. It's important for all patients to discuss treatment options with their doctors, and part of that is to know the side effects of the treatment and learn what can be done to minimize the risks. This is important no matter what the disease or condition being treated, or the treatment prescribed. All new treatments should be closely followed. It is impossible for all side effects and contraindications to be known from clinical trials. It is only after the drug is in use for a while that adverse reactions surface. Because of this, several European countries have instituted post-market surveillance systems. Let's hope that Health Canada will finally move to implement a comprehensive, user friendly, consumer driven post market surveillance system for Canadians taking prescription medications. Our health is at stake.

For additional information on Celebrex, see the Health Canada and Pfizer websites:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/protection/warnings/2004/2004_67_e.html

<http://www.pfizer.ca/english/newsroom/press%20releases/default.asp?s=1&releaseID=149>