



***Prescriber's Letter* Clarifies Avandia Heart Attack Warning with Stepwise Diabetes Treatment Algorithm for Prescribers**

May 25, 2007 – STOCKTON, CA – Prescribers and diabetes patients alike are wondering what to make of recent media reports of a *New England Journal of Medicine* study suggesting *Avandia* (rosiglitazone) increases heart attack risk by 43% in diabetes patients. *Avandia*, an oral agent for type 2 diabetes, accounted for more than 3 billion dollars in worldwide sales last year. Critics are jumping to liken these *N Engl J Med* study results to the early cardiovascular concerns seen with *Vioxx* that ultimately led to its removal from the market.

But analysts at *Prescriber's Letter* say that crunching the study's numbers reveals only part of the story. Since this report is a meta-analysis, it is merely a study of prior study results. In order to draw conclusions that can be applied by health professionals and patients, one has to consider this study along with earlier data and knowledge of a particular patient.

Prescriber's Letter helps prescribers and patients put this new study into perspective. Experts are concluding that, as with many other diabetes medications, *Avandia's* only definite benefit is lowering blood glucose to help control diabetes. This new study reinforces that *Avandia* does not provide any long-term cardiovascular benefit in diabetes patients. In fact, it's well known that both available drugs in the "glitazone" class, *Avandia* and *Actos* (pioglitazone), cause fluid retention and should be avoided in patients with moderate to severe heart failure.

Prescriber's Letter also addresses another question raised by this study. People want to know if the heart attack risk is a "class-effect" that will be observed with *Actos*. This study does not answer this question since it did not look at *Actos*. Another highly debated study suggests that *Actos* (pioglitazone) may actually reduce heart attacks and strokes. But the jury is still very much out on whether all the drugs in this glitazone class lead to cardiovascular problems.

Even more important for prescribers and patients, though, is how to make treatment decisions based on the results of the new *Avandia* study.

Prescriber's Letter experts say to follow the recommendations in its *Stepwise Order of Treatments For Type 2 Diabetes*. After diet and exercise, most patients should be started on metformin. If a glitazone drug is to be started, preference should be given to *Actos* over *Avandia*. But if a patient is already stable and doing well on *Avandia* the patient should not be switched to *Actos* at this time, based only on the results of this study.

Prescriber's Letter, an evidence-based subscription resource for prescribers, provides the facts about the quality and results of studies like this one, without any spin or sensationalism. A concise analysis of this study is available at www.prescribersletter.com/newsroom/avandia. In

the article, the editors tell prescribers what they need to know to translate this study into practice. The editors also attach their *Detail-Document* that explores the facts that shaped the *Letter's* recommendations. This added resource also provides the *Stepwise Order of Treatment* guidelines and a handout to help doctors counsel patients on the risks of *Avandia* and *Actos*. Thousands of articles and *Detail-Documents* like this one are available at www.prescribersletter.com.

The editorial team at *Prescriber's Letter* has been publishing drug information recommendations since 1985 and carefully researches the most important topics and compiles the evidence into monthly *Letters* consisting of concise articles each linked to an in-depth *Detail-Document*. In order to remain completely unbiased, *Prescriber's Letter* does not accept any advertising and has no ties with any drug manufacturing company.

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