



Factfile Supplement

November 2002

Aspirin and Ibuprofen

Our attention has been drawn to a potentially serious interaction between low dose Aspirin and Ibuprofen described by the Medicines Monitoring Unit at the University of Dundee. The retrospective study indicated that patients with cardiovascular disease who took Ibuprofen as well as Aspirin were nearly twice as likely to die within the study period (April 1989 to April 1997), as those taking Aspirin alone. These data add further concerns to ones already published by Catella-Lawson F et al (Cyclooxygenase inhibitors and the antiplatelet effects of Aspirin, *New Eng. JMed* 2001; 345: 1809-17) that the concurrent use of Ibuprofen blocks the antiplatelet effects of Aspirin.

Factfile 12/2001 – Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease in People with Type II Diabetes

This Factfile omitted any reference to physical inactivity as a major risk factor for the development of diabetes. We apologise for that omission. Further details on the topic can be found in Factfile 04/2001.

Factfile 01/2002 – Coronary Risk Prediction in Smokers

Another correspondent asked why those who gave up smoking within five years should be counted as current smokers when using the Coronary Risk Prediction Charts. After smoking cessation, the risk of coronary heart disease begins to reduce quite rapidly and statistically significant benefits are manifest by about three months, but the full benefit is not seen for about five years. Consequently, the advice of the experts is that those who gave up smoking within the past five years should be regarded as "current smokers".

Factfile 03/2002 – Safety of Plant Sterols/Stanoles

One of our readers has questioned the safety of plant sterols/stanoles in terms of their potential oestrogenic properties. The news here is reassuring: extensive safety testing has failed to show any significant effects (Baker VA et al, *Food & Chem. Tox.* 1999; 37: 13-22; Waalkens-Berendsen DH et al, *Food & Chem. Tox.* 1999; 37: 683-96).

Factfile 05/2002 – Hormone Replacement Therapy: An Update

The Medical Research Council has announced that the Womens International Study of Long Duration Oestrogen after Menopause (WISDOM) has been stopped for scientific and practical reasons following evidence emerging from the US Womens' Health Initiative, which showed that taking HRT long-term does not have a major effect in preventing heart disease. Further details of the long-term effects of HRT can be found in Beral V; Banks E and Reeves G; *Lancet* 2002 360: 942-44.