

JOURNAL WATCH

November 1, 2007

Vol. 27 No. 21

From the publishers of
**The New England
Journal of Medicine**

CT Colonography vs. Colonoscopy

In earlier studies, the accuracy of computed tomographic colonography (CTC) screening has varied compared with conventional colonoscopy. This latest study from the University of Wisconsin compared two groups: In a "primary CTC" group, 3120 people underwent initial CTC screening, and those with polyps of at least 6 mm were offered colonoscopy the same day; in a "primary colonoscopy" comparison group, 3163 people directly underwent colonoscopy. Patients were not randomized but rather were referred by physicians for one procedure or the other. Mean age and male/female ratio were similar in the two groups.

Only 8% of CTC patients proceeded to colonoscopy; thus, many fewer polyps were removed in the primary CTC group than in the primary colonoscopy group (561 vs. 2434). However, the number of advanced adenomas (adenomas ≥ 10 mm, and smaller adenomas with villous features or high-grade dysplasia) was similar in the two groups (109 and 117). Invasive cancers were diagnosed in 14 primary CTC patients and 4 primary colonoscopy patients. Colonic perforation occurred in 7 primary colonoscopy patients (4 of whom required surgery), and in no primary CTC patients.

COMMENT:

In this study, initial CTC screening (followed by selective colonoscopy) compared favorably with universal colonoscopy in the detection of advanced neoplasia, and it minimized the risk for perforation. However, CTC patients with only one or two polyps measuring 6 to 9 mm were offered CTC follow-up instead of immediate colonoscopy; for the 5% of CTC patients who accepted this offer, long-term follow-up isn't yet available. Several other caveats apply. First, the accuracy of CTC will vary from center to center, depending

on technique and experience. Second, some authorities have expressed concern about radiation exposure, especially with repeated CTC follow-up studies. And third, it's unclear whether the incidental identification of extracolonic findings at CTC will confer net benefit or harm in screened populations.

— **Allan S. Brett, MD**

Kim DH et al. CT colonography versus colonoscopy for the detection of advanced neoplasia. N Engl J Med 2007 Oct 4; 357:1403.

Does Donepezil Control Agitation in Alzheimer Patients?

Antipsychotic drugs are widely used to treat agitation in patients with Alzheimer disease (AD), but side effects are problematic and effectiveness is modest at best. Would cholinesterase inhibitors, which are used to improve cognition in Alzheimer dementia, be a

suitable alternative for treatment of agitation and behavioral disturbances?

U.K. researchers enrolled 272 patients with AD who had clinically significant agitation (most had not responded to a brief psychosocial treatment program designed to reduce agitation with non-drug interventions). Patients were randomized to receive the cholinesterase inhibitor donepezil (Aricept) or placebo for 12 weeks. The primary outcome, scores on a standardized agitation inventory, did not differ significantly between groups at 12 weeks. In addition, several secondary neuropsychiatric endpoints were similar in the two groups.

COMMENT:

In this trial, donepezil failed to control agitation in patients with Alzheimer disease. These results, coupled with disappointing outcomes from atypical antipsychotic drugs (*JW* Nov 1 2006, p. 166, and *N Engl J Med* 2006; 355:1525), leave us with a vacuum in pharmacologic

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