

QUESTIONS From Symposium Participants

Q: Should I tell my patients to discontinue clopidogrel before undergoing dental procedures, colonoscopy, or major surgery?

A: Minor bleeding from dental procedures can be managed (eg, with ice packs or pressure) without discontinuing clopidogrel. Any bleeding during a screening colonoscopy would also be minor and probably would not warrant stopping the drug and potentially increasing the patient's risk of a cardiac event. If the patient is likely to have colonic polyps or to require biopsy, stopping the drug would be advisable. Major surgery would require clopidogrel discontinuation because the risk of excessive bleeding would be higher, but discontinuing it would place the patient at risk for a thrombotic event. These decisions need to be based on each patient's risk profile, and the risks and benefits of stopping the drug should be explained to the patient.

Q: Is thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) a concern with clopidogrel?

A: It can occur, but fortunately it is a rare complication.

Q: Is PPI prophylaxis a standard of care for gastric protection in patients receiving antiplatelet therapy?

A: No. PPIs for routine prophylaxis tend to be overused. The main thing for clinicians to remember is that concomitant PPI and clopidogrel therapy may attenuate the benefits of clopidogrel after ACS. PPIs should not be used in the absence of a clear indication. H₂ blockers may be tried for occasional dyspepsia.

Q: Do patients receiving clopidogrel who develop a condition requiring heparin treatment need to discontinue clopidogrel before starting anticoagulant therapy?

A: No. The mechanisms of action of the 2 drugs are different.

Q: Do age or gender impact the effects of aspirin?

A: The gender issue is interesting. For primary prevention, aspirin appears to be more cardioprotective in men than in women. However, it decreases the risk of stroke more in women than in men. Age is not an issue for prescribing aspirin.

Read more Q&A from the live symposia at www.practicingclinicians.com/H2_2009/acsqa.pdf