



This Week in the Journal

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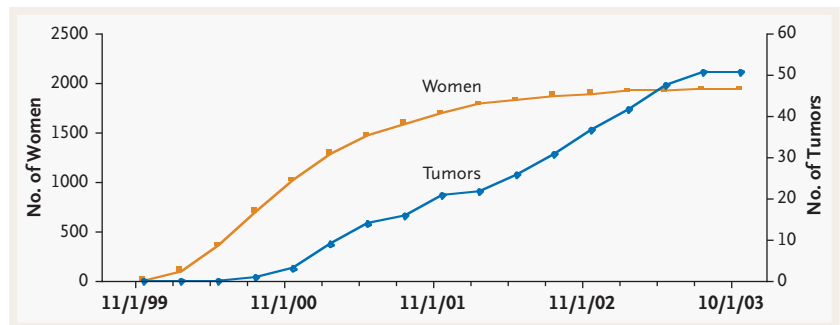
AUGUST 5, 2004

The Shrinking Antibiotic Pipeline

Richard Wenzel

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Efficacy of MRI and Mammography for Breast-Cancer Screening in Women with a Familial or Genetic Predisposition



In a comparison of mammography with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for screening women at high risk for breast cancer, MRI was more sensitive but less specific than mammography.

This study of more than 1000 women with a genetic or familial predisposition to breast cancer shows that MRI is more suitable than mammography for screening purposes in such populations; however, MRI screening results in an increased number of additional diagnostic procedures.

SEE P. 427; EDITORIAL, P. 497; CME, P. 519

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Peginterferon Alfa-2a plus Ribavirin for Chronic Hepatitis C in HIV-Infected Patients

In this randomized trial involving patients with chronic hepatitis C who were also infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), peginterferon alfa-2a plus ribavirin was more effective than interferon alfa-2a plus ribavirin or peginterferon alfa-2a plus placebo (rates of sustained virologic response, 40 percent, 12 percent, and 20 percent, respectively).

Peginterferon alfa-2a plus ribavirin was effective in patients with both chronic hepatitis C and HIV infection, although the rates of response were not as high as in previous studies involving HIV-negative patients.

SEE P. 438; PERSPECTIVE, P. 422

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Treatment of Chronic Hepatitis C in Patients Coinfected with HIV

Chronic hepatitis C infection is common among patients with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. In this randomized trial, 133 patients were assigned to receive either peginterferon alfa-2a with ribavirin or interferon alfa-2a with ribavirin. The rate of sustained virologic response was higher in the peginterferon group than in the interferon group (27 percent vs. 12 percent).

The results of this trial show that HIV-infected patients have a low rate of response to treatment for chronic hepatitis C. The relapse rates were particularly high among those infected with hepatitis C virus genotype 1.

SEE P. 451; PERSPECTIVE, P. 422

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Familial Cardiac Myxoma and Mutation of Perinatal Myosin Heavy Chain

Familial cardiac myxomas may occur in conjunction with a variety of other abnormalities, together called the Carney complex. A particular variant is characterized by musculoskeletal manifestations. In this study, a mutation in the perinatal myosin heavy chain was identified as the underlying cause of this Carney complex variant. Although the disorder is rare, the findings are important because they suggest a role of mutated contractile proteins in cardiac tumorigenesis.

SEE P. 460; PERSPECTIVE, P. 424

CLINICAL PRACTICE

Laser Vision Correction

A 32-year-old woman with moderate myopia and mild dry eye has worn soft contact lenses for 12 years but now is not tolerating them well. On examination, her refraction is $-4.25 + 1.0 \times 90$ (-3.75 diopters of spherical equivalent and 1 diopter of astigmatism at 90 degrees) in the right eye and $-3.5 + 0.5 \times 88$ in the left eye, yielding a best corrected visual acuity of 20/20 in each eye. She asks about refractive surgery. What would you advise?

SEE P. 470; CME, P. 517

CASE RECORDS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

A Man with Recurrent Gastrointestinal Bleeding

A 48-year-old man had had a 33-month history of intermittent abdominal pain and black stools containing occult blood. Endoscopic and imaging studies of the upper and lower gastrointestinal tract revealed no abnormalities. Video-capsule endoscopy revealed a mucosal lesion in the distal ileum. A diagnostic procedure was performed.

SEE P. 488

SOUNDING BOARD

Beyond Fast Track for Drug Approvals

In recent years, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted fast-track approval for cancer treatments that are effective in only 10 to 15 percent of patients, without requiring sponsors to identify the patients who are most likely to benefit. In this article, the authors propose that the FDA make rapid approval of new molecularly targeted cancer therapies contingent on sponsors' agreement to invest in research designed to identify subgroups of patients who are likely to have a response to treatment.

SEE P. 501

MEDICAL PROGRESS

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder, one of the most distinct syndromes in psychiatry, has been described in numerous cultures throughout history. The unique hallmark of the illness is mania, which is characterized by elevated mood or euphoria, overactivity with a lack of need for sleep, and overoptimism that impairs judgment. Periods of depression are also a feature of the disorder.

SEE P. 476; CME, P. 518

