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Press Release

SOURCE: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

AHRQ-Funded Study Shows Increase in Aspirin Use in Patients with Heart Disease, but Underuse is Still a Concern

ROCKVILLE, Md., March 8 /PRNewswire/ -- A new study funded by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) found that the percentage of patients with heart disease who report taking aspirin regularly increased from 59 percent to 81 percent between 1995 and 1999. These results reflect substantial improvements in practice, but additional patients could benefit from this inexpensive, effective treatment that reduces deaths from heart disease, recurrent heart attacks, and strokes. The article is being published in the March 15 issue of the American Journal of Cardiology.

Researchers at one of seven AHRQ-supported Centers for Education and Research on Therapeutics (CERTs), the Duke University Medical Center, surveyed more than 25,000 patients from the Duke Databank for Cardiovascular Diseases. They examined trends in aspirin use, patient characteristics, and long-term outcomes for aspirin effectiveness.

Researchers found that patients who didn't take aspirin for reasons related to their heart conditions had nearly twice the risk of dying than those who took the drug regularly.

Study results show a number of clear characteristics that were predictors of aspirin use. Patients more likely to take the drug were younger males, nonsmokers, and those who had suffered prior heart attacks or undergone revascularization procedures in which clogged arteries were unblocked. Those unlikely to take aspirin regularly were patients with heart failure, diabetes, or hypertension.

Clinical trials have consistently shown patients with diabetes benefit more from aspirin than do patients without diabetes.

The AHRQ-supported U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recently issued a recommendation to clinicians to discuss the benefits and risks of aspirin therapy with healthy adults who are at risk of coronary heart disease. The USPSTF recommendation was published in the January 15 issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine. Go to the AHRQ Web site for additional information on

the USPSTF and this recommendation at <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/prevenix.htm>

The study, "Underuse of Aspirin in a Referral Population with Documented Coronary Artery Disease," is co-authored by Drs. Califf, DeLong, Ostbye, Muhlbaier, and others, at the Duke University Medical Center.

SOURCE: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

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