Reviewer's report

Title: Back to thiazide-diuretics for hypertension: reflections after a decade of irrational prescribing

Version: 2 Date: 18 November 2003

Reviewer: Mark R Nelson

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Fretheim, A. Back to thiaz....

Background

Author needs to be more technical in description given the readership. Rather than “people’s health” should have “important clinical outcomes such as reduction in myocardial infarctions and strokes”.

The effectiveness of hypertensive treatment

First paragraph 2nd sentence should say “a review of clinical trials” or else provide references to the original trials, MRC, Australian trial in mild hypertension, etc.

Is it 60s and 70s or more accurately 70s and 80s?

Clinical trials comparing new and old drugs

These should be referenced here rather than next section.

“Thiazides are, again, first line.” Thiazides were always recommended as first-line treatment in the guidelines. As the author points out they were however neglected as first line agents because of drug company promotion and physician belief that newer is better (1).

The author needs to address the one trial that demonstrated superiority of ACE-inhibitors over diuretics in elderly males, ANBP2 (2). It was conducted in primary care and therefore has relevancy to the readership and raises the intriguing possibility that ACE-I may have superiority in individuals of high absolute risk such as elderly males that would not be evident in populations at lower risk. The author could also point out that the analysis by gender was post hoc and therefore may represent “picking the winner after the horse has crossed the finish line”!


Figure

I agree with the author’s contention that the company portrayed has marketed the results of ANBP2 and ALLHAT as though they supported their drug even though the former did not even investigate it! I think this point should be made. However I would think that you would not be able to reproduce their advertisement but would leave it up to your lawyers to decide.
I think this article should be published subject to the author addressing the previous criticisms.

Mark Nelson

What next?: Accept after minor compulsory revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable