

The Medical Letter®

On Drugs and Therapeutics

Published by The Medical Letter, Inc. • 145 Huguenot Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801 • A Nonprofit Publication

IN THIS ISSUE (starts on next page)

In Brief: Safety of Azithromycin p 45

Important Copyright Message

The Medical Letter® publications are protected by US and international copyright laws. Forwarding, copying or any distribution of this material is prohibited.

Sharing a password with a non-subscriber or otherwise making the contents of this site available to third parties is strictly prohibited.

By accessing and reading the attached content I agree to comply with US and international copyright laws and these terms and conditions of The Medical Letter, Inc.

**For further information click: [Subscriptions, Site Licenses, Reprints](#)
or call customer service at: 800-211-2769**

FORWARDING OR COPYING IS A VIOLATION OF US AND INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT LAWS

The Medical Letter®

On Drugs and Therapeutics

Published by The Medical Letter, Inc. • 145 Huguenot Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801 • A Nonprofit Publication

Volume 54 (Issue 1392)
June 11, 2012

www.medicalletter.org

IN BRIEF

Safety of Azithromycin

Recently published results of a large, carefully conducted retrospective study indicated that use of the antibiotic azithromycin (*Zithromax*, and others) may increase the risk of cardiovascular death, especially in patients with a high baseline risk of cardiovascular disease.¹ One possible mechanism is prolongation of the QT interval, which is known to occur rarely with azithromycin and more frequently with the other macrolide antibiotics erythromycin (*Erythrocin*, and others) and clarithromycin (*Biaxin*, and others).

Among the patients who received 347,795 prescriptions for azithromycin, there were 29 cardiovascular deaths, a significantly higher rate than the 42 that occurred among the patients who received 1,348,672 prescriptions for amoxicillin (which does not prolong the QT interval) or the 41 that occurred among the 1,391,180 patients who took no antibiotics. Among patients with the highest baseline risk of cardiovascular disease, treatment with azithromycin, compared to amoxicillin, would have resulted in 245 additional cardiovascular deaths per million courses of the antibiotic.

As with any retrospective study, there could have been some undetected differences between the patients who received one drug or the other, but use of an appropriate non-macrolide alternative² instead of azithromycin might be reasonable in patients with cardiovascular disease or in those who are taking other drugs that can prolong the QT interval (www.azcert.org).

1. WA Ray et al. Azithromycin and the risk of cardiovascular death. *N Engl J Med* 2012; 366:1881.
2. Drugs for bacterial infections. *Treat Guidel Med Lett* 2010; 8:43.

The Medical Letter®
On Drugs and Therapeutics

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Mark Abramowicz, M.D.
EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Gianna Zuccotti, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.P., Harvard Medical School
EDITOR: Jean-Marie Pflomm, Pharm.D.
ASSISTANT EDITORS, DRUG INFORMATION: Susan M. Daron, Pharm.D., Corinne E. Zanone, Pharm.D.
CONSULTING EDITORS: Brinda M. Shah, Pharm.D., F. Peter Swanson, M.D.
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:
Carl W. Bazil, M.D., Ph.D., Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons
Vanessa K. Dalton, M.D., M.P.H., University of Michigan Medical School
Eric J. Epstein, M.D., Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Jules Hirsch, M.D., Rockefeller University
David N. Juurlink, BPhM, M.D., Ph.D., Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
Richard B. Kim, M.D., University of Western Ontario
Hans Meinertz, M.D., University Hospital, Copenhagen
Sandip K. Mukherjee, M.D., F.A.C.C., Yale School of Medicine
Dan M. Roden, M.D., Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
F. Estelle R. Simons, M.D., University of Manitoba
Jordan W. Smoller, M.D., Sc.D., Harvard Medical School
Neal H. Steigbigel, M.D., New York University School of Medicine
Arthur M. F. Yee, M.D., Ph.D., F.A.C.R., Weil Medical College of Cornell University
SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Donna Goodstein, Amy Faucard
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Cynthia Macapagal Covey
EDITORIAL FELLOW: Esperance A.K. Schaefer, M.D., M.P.H., Harvard Medical School
MANAGING EDITOR: Susie Wong
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR: Liz Donohue
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: Cheryl Brown
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SALES: Gene Carbona
FULFILLMENT & SYSTEMS MANAGER: Cristine Romatowski
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS: Joanne F. Valentino
VICE PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER: Yosef Wissner-Levy

Founded in 1959 by
Arthur Kallet and Harold Aaron, M.D.

Copyright and Disclaimer: The Medical Letter is an independent nonprofit organization that provides health care professionals with unbiased drug prescribing recommendations. The editorial process used for its publications relies on a review of published and unpublished literature, with an emphasis on controlled clinical trials, and on the opinions of its consultants. The Medical Letter is supported solely by subscription fees and accepts no advertising, grants or donations. No part of the material may be reproduced or transmitted by any process in whole or in part without prior permission in writing. The editors do not warrant that all the material in this publication is accurate and complete in every respect. The editors shall not be held responsible for any damage resulting from any error, inaccuracy or omission.

Subscription Services

Mailing Address:
The Medical Letter, Inc.
145 Huguenot St. Ste. 312
New Rochelle, NY 10801-7537
Customer Service:
Call: 800-211-2769 or 914-235-0500
Fax: 914-632-1733
Web Site: www.medicalletter.org
E-mail: custserv@medicalletter.org

Subscriptions (US):
1 year - \$98; 2 years - \$189;
3 years - \$279. \$49.00 per year for students, interns, residents and fellows in the US and Canada.

Permissions:
To reproduce any portion of this issue, please e-mail your request to: permissions@medicalletter.org

E-mail site license inquiries to:
info@medicalletter.org or call 800-211-2769 x315.
Special fees for bulk subscriptions. Special classroom rates are available. Back issues are \$12 each. Major credit cards accepted.

Copyright 2012. ISSN 1523-2859

