Diabetes currently affects more than 29.1 million people worldwide. This silent killer disease slowly leaves an imprint in cells affecting vasculature and target organs predisposing patients to the future development of microvascular and macrovascular complications. With this mind, cardiovascular (CV) outcomes trials in diabetes management have become largely favorable.

The EMPA-REG OUTCOME trial results were released at a conference this September; the applause and excitement following indicated that this data was truly remarkable and some even considered it a landmark trial.

7020 patients were randomized to receive empagliflozin 10 mg, empagliflozin 25 mg, or placebo once daily for a median follow-up of 3.1 years. Patients that were included had T2DM and high CV risk – almost half had prior history of myocardial infarction. They were at least 18 years old, primarily Caucasian males (~71%) with glycosylated hemoglobin (A1C) levels of 8.07%. Approximately 95% of patients were also on antihypertensive medications. 97% of patients completed the study.

The primary outcome of three point major adverse cardiac events (3P-MACE) occurred in 10.5% (490/4687) of patients in the pooled empagliflozin group vs 12.1% (282/2333) in the placebo group. The pooled empagliflozin group had a hazard ratio (HR) of 0.86 (95% CI, 0.78 to 0.99) and p=0.04 for superiority. The secondary outcome of four point (4P-) MACE occurred in 12.8% (599/4687) in the empagliflozin group vs 14.3% (333/2333) in the placebo group (HR of 0.89 (95% CI, 0.78 to 1.01 and p= 0.04 for superiority). Compared to placebo, empagliflozin did provide small reductions in weight and blood pressure and a greater A1C reduction.

The greatest risk reduction was observed with the secondary outcome of CV death; there was a 38% reduction with empagliflozin (3.7% vs 5.9% placebo). A 32% reduction was observed with all-cause mortality for empagliflozin (5.7% vs 8.3% placebo), and a 35% risk reduction in hospitalization for heart failure with empagliflozin (2.7% vs 4.1% placebo). There were however, no differences in the rate of MI and stroke, creating more mystery around the probable mechanisms of risk reduction in CV death.

Patients had similar rates of adverse events, serious adverse events and discontinuation across both groups. Genital infections, as expected, were reported more frequently in the empagliflozin group (6.4% vs 1.8% placebo). Confirmed hypoglycemia (27.8% empagliflozin vs 27.9% placebo), DKA (0.1% vs <0.1%), and bone fractures (3.8% vs 3.9%), were similar across both groups. Acute renal failure, however, was lower in the pooled empagliflozin group (5.2% vs 6.6%), and renal function was also maintained with empagliflozin.

These results have been enticing for clinicians and researchers alike. This trial marks empagliflozin as the first glucose-lowering agent to demonstrate a noticeable CV mortality risk reduction in patients with T2DM. Looking at the robust data, it is only a matter of time before there is a shift in the diabetes treatment paradigm.

Meet the Fairleigh Dickinson University School of Pharmacy Faculty, Maria Leibfried and Alexandra Libman

Maria Leibfried joined the FDU School of Pharmacy faculty in September 2015. As Clinical Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice based at The Valley Hospital, Maria provides Doctor of Pharmacy students with experiential education in internal medicine/acute care. After earning a B.S. in Pharmacy and Doctor of Pharmacy from Rutgers University College of Pharmacy, Maria furthered her training through an ASHP-Accredited General Pharmacy Practice Residency at Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, NY.

Maria’s practice has included community pharmacy, hospital pharmacy, consultant pharmacy, and continuing education. Maria brought her years of practice into academia when she joined the faculty of St. John’s University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Queens, NY, and now has joined the School of Pharmacy at Fairleigh Dickinson University. In addition to being a licensed pharmacist in New Jersey and New York, she is Board Certified in Nutrition Support Pharmacy and is a Certified Consultant Pharmacist in NJ. Her research interests include asthma, cardiology, experiential education, geriatrics, informatics, inpatient pharmacy systems/performance improvement, interdisciplinary/interprofessional education, nutrition support, patient education, pedagogy, psychiatry.

Alexandra Libman (nickname: Sasha) joined the Fairleigh Dickinson University School of Pharmacy in August 2015. As Clinical Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice, Sasha precepts students during their experiential rotation in ambulatory care pharmacy practice at The Valley Hospital’s Outpatient Heart Failure Clinic.

Sasha earned a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Long Island University, Arnold & Marie Schwartz College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Brooklyn, NY. She completed an ASHP-accredited general pharmacy practice residency at Mount Sinai Beth Israel in New York, NY, and then continued on to do a second year of residency focused in geriatrics at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center in Bronx, NY. She successfully completed the Developing Excellence in Teaching for the Pharmacy Professional program at St. John’s University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Queens, NY. Sasha is a licensed pharmacist in the states of New York and New Jersey.

She enjoys educating students and inspiring them to develop as future leaders of pharmacy. Her interests include diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, smoking cessation, asthma, COPD, and oncology.

Question:
Should Effient® be stopped in a patient that is to undergo dental surgery performed by a dental surgeon? If yes, when should it be stopped?

Answer:
Effient® (Prasugrel Tablets) is indicated to reduce the rate of thrombotic cardiovascular (CV) events in patients with acute coronary syndrome (ACS) who are managed with percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI). Prasugrel carries a Black Box Warning for bleeding risk, as it can cause significant, sometimes fatal, bleeding.¹

CHEST guidelines (9th edition) and the package insert specify stopping prasugrel prior to coronary artery bypass graft. Other discontinuation guidelines, however, are not yet available.² The manufacturer recommends discontinuation of prasugrel for elective surgery, but does not specify when to stop the medication. In patients managed with PCI and stent, discontinuation of prasugrel, like other antiplatelets, increases the risk of stent thrombosis, myocardial infarction (MI), and death. Therefore, breaks in therapy should be avoided; if the medication is temporarily discontinued, it should be restarted as soon as possible.³

The American Dental Association recommends that it is not necessary for most patients to stop antiplatelet therapy before dental procedures, and that local measures be utilized to control bleeding. The risk of thrombotic events must be weighed against the risk of bleeding, and the potential to mitigate bleeding must be employed. Patient-specific decisions regarding prasugrel therapy should be made upon consultation with the primary physician/cardiologist.

Summary
In most patients, the benefit of preventing thromboembolism, stroke, and MI with prasugrel therapy outweighs the risk of bleeding in patients undergoing dental procedures. Since bleeding time will be prolonged, additional measures to mitigate bleeding must be employed. Patient-specific decisions regarding prasugrel therapy should be made upon consultation with the primary physician/cardiologist.

References:
According to the CDC, nicotine is the leading cause of drug addiction in the US. Nicotine, a naturally occurring substance found in tobacco, has been identified as being just as addicting as heroin, cocaine, and alcohol. Although many studies have shown numerous health benefits associated with smoking cessation, a large population in the US continues to struggle with nicotine addiction. Approximately 70% of current smokers have reported having an intention to quit smoking; since 2002, the amount of former smokers has surpassed the amount of current smokers. In order to continue this trend, The Valley Hospital is committed to making influential strides along with patients to combat nicotine withdrawal and addiction.

Nicotine withdrawal

It is important to prevent nicotine withdrawal in current smokers admitted to the hospital. As healthcare providers, it is our duty to ensure patients are given appropriate treatment modalities in lieu of smoking as withdrawal symptoms can complicate the primary reason for hospitalization. Symptoms of nicotine withdrawal are non-specific and may include irritability, anger, anxiety, difficulty thinking, increased hunger, and insomnia. Several treatment options are available for the prevention of these symptoms such as nicotine replacement products and non-nicotine agents. Dosing for these products is dependent on a patient’s daily cigarette use; each cigarette contains approximately 2 mg of nicotine. Order sets are readily available in Meditech for patients who are current smokers. These order sets have a total of 4 treatment options, two nicotine containing agents and two non-nicotine containing agents. The approval of netupitant/palonosetron was based on the safety and efficacy demonstrated in pivotal clinical trials showing the netupitant/palonosetron offered superior prevention of CINV compared with palonosetron following highly emetogenic chemotherapy.

Smoking cessation

The Valley Hospital also offers smoking cessation group meetings for those patients that have made a decision to quit smoking. These meetings are held once a week, for a total of 6 consecutive weeks. This multidisciplinary meeting is led by a respiratory therapist, pharmacist, and case manager. Patients have the opportunity to, but are not forced to, express their current struggles and successes of becoming and staying smoke-free. Different therapies that are available to assist with this process are then discussed. At the end of each session, patients are given the option to take home one of two nicotine replacement agents (nicotine patch or nicotine gum) to assist them with their goal to quit smoking. These open sessions are especially helpful for those who are struggling with nicotine withdrawal, making the decision to quit smoking, or staying smoke free. If you would like to get involved or attend a session for general information, email Rowan Pragdat at rpragda@valleyhealth.com or Rebecca Bowlin at rbowlin@valleyhealth.com.