



# The GeriJournal

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## COPD Blues

In a few months, the production of Combivent® inhalers will cease. The manufacturer is unable to find an environmentally friendly propellant to add to their metered dose canisters.

While the current supply is expected to last until some time this summer, we should begin to think of possible alternatives. The Canadian guidelines, issued by the Canadian Thoracic Society ([www.COPDguidelines.ca](http://www.COPDguidelines.ca)) should help shape these revisions.

Spiriva® is the first option to replace Combivent®. It should be combined with a Ventolin® (salbutamol) inhaler used on a PRN basis. If Ventolin® is required frequently, Serevent® (salmeterol) or formoterol Oxeze®/Foradil® should be added on a routine twice daily basis.

If further control is required, theophylline or inhaled steroids such as Flovent® or Pulmicort® may be added. Detailed treatment and dosing information can be gleaned from the guidelines.



## Avandia and Fractures

GlaxoSmithKline, in consultation with Health Canada, has issued a product safety release regarding Avandia® products. In their ongoing ADOPT trial, the female members of the Avandia® group experienced significantly more fractures than those receiving glyburide or metformin.

The fractures were not osteoporotic in nature. They affected the legs, hands and arms, rather than the hip, wrist and spinal column (the fracture sites commonly associated with osteoporosis).

Although the fracture risk is increased, the total number of fractures with Avandia® is still small. As a result, the ADOPT trial has been allowed to continue so the relative benefit of Avandia® compared to metformin and glyburide can be determined.

## Gotta Love That D

The benefits of most vitamins are often overstated in today's society. As a result, regular folks frequently take high doses of vitamins, and may be doing themselves more harm than good. In long term care, it is difficult to quarrel with the use of low potency supplements, particularly in residents with swallowing and nourishment issues.



While products such as beta carotene, vitamin E and vitamin C have come under fire in recent years, the news about vitamin D seems to only get better and better. Vitamin D's positive effect on calcium metabolism and bone health are well known.

New evidence linking low vitamin D levels to a higher incidence of various cancers (breast, colorectal and prostate) and other diseases such as diabetes and MS is emerging. A review article from *Am J Prev Med.* 2007;32;210-216 showed that ample to strong blood levels of vitamin D, may reduce colorectal cancer rates by as much as two-thirds.

Vitamin D levels can be determined easily by measuring the amount of 25-hydroxyvitamin D in the bloodstream. With reduced sunlight exposure during the winter months, our bodies produce less than desirable amounts of vitamin D. Supplementation is usually required. The latest studies suggest that intake should be increased to 1,000 – 2,000 IU each day. Currently, The Osteoporosis Society of Canada suggests an intake of 800 IU daily for older adults. Based on the latest evidence, other national agencies may move to bolster their recommendations.

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