



# The GeriJournal

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## Formulary News

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The latest big name drug to go generic is Plavix® (clopidogrel). The generic form (Apotex) is the same shape and colour, with similar markings (CL 75). It is a bit smaller which should help with swallowing.

The 4.5 and 9 mg strengths of Hydromorph Contin® are now covered by ODB. This will allow for easier dose titration in palliative care. A new injectable antipsychotic has been added as well. Invega Sustenna® (paliperadone) is an active metabolite of risperidone. While it has no clinical advantage, when compared to Risperdal Consta®, administration is much simpler and likely less painful. Invega Sustenna® is supplied in prefilled syringes with two different needles, a 22-gauge needle for i.m. gluteal administration and a 23-gauge needle for injection into the deltoid. Risperdal Consta® is supplied as a complicated multistep kit, with mixing and configuration required before injection. Furthermore, needle size is bigger (20 and 21-gauge) and

injection frequency greater (biweekly vs. monthly) with the Risperdal® product.

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## Statins in Season

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It's been a quiet flu season so far, but you never know what's waiting just around the corner. In case we need a little extra help, we may have a new weapon against the Influenza virus – statins!

A publication in the December 13<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Journal of Infectious Diseases* showed a remarkable reduction in mortality in association with these cholesterol lowering drugs. The charts of more than 3,000 hospitalized, culture positive Influenza patients from the 2007-2008 flu season were analyzed. One third of these patients (median age 76 years) were taking statins before or during their hospital stay. There were a total of 151 deaths, but those taking statins were 41% less likely to die within the first thirty days following their diagnosis. Adjustments were made to compensate for differences in age; race; cardiovascular, lung and renal disease; influenza vaccination; and antiviral administration between the statin and non-statin groups.

There have been other studies showing a statin benefit in pneumonia and Influenza, but this is the most extensive one to date. It is believed this protective effect is due to a

reduction in inflammatory response and subsequent fever, a secondary action of statins. If a prospective study were to confirm the results of this analysis we may find ourselves using a new medication, Lipiflu® (Lipitor/Tamiflu), to prevent and treat Influenza in the future.

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## Cranberry for UTIs

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Cranberry products and extract have long been thought to be useful in the prevention and treatment of urinary tract infections. In fact, four notable placebo controlled trials have shown a 34% reduction in UTI recurrence. The *Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada* list cranberry juice in their guidelines for prevention of recurrent UTIs in women.

Until recently, however, cranberry products had not been compared head to head against antibiotics in UTI prophylaxis. A study published in *Archives of Internal Medicine* did just that. Bactrim® plain, one tablet daily, was compared to one 500 mg capsule of cranberry powder given twice daily. Bactrim® was significantly more effective, but resistance to Bactrim® and unrelated antibiotics often developed. Cranberry products are a safe (warfarin interactions are possible), moderately effective alternative in the prevention of recurrent UTIs.