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## PHARMACISTS SAY BETA IS BETTER

Some General Practitioners (GPs) over-estimate adverse risks associated with the use of beta blocker drugs in the fight against heart disease, according to research launched today at the British Pharmaceutical Conference (BPC) in Manchester.

Beta blockers are known to reduce deaths and hospitalisation in patients with heart failure.<sup>1</sup> But despite national evidence-based guidance<sup>2</sup>, the prescribing of beta blockers to treat heart failure in the UK is low.

Pharmacist Dr Duncan Petty from the University of Leeds led the research and said: "The study assessed GPs' knowledge of beta blockers through a questionnaire, and found that although GPs were aware of the scale of the benefits, they tended to **over-estimate adverse effects** compared to placebo.

"The harmful effects of beta blockers in patients with heart failure who do not have contraindications are small. However, the benefits are high, as are those for ACE-inhibitor drugs that are also used to treat heart failure."

The study, based in Bradford, also showed that GPs tended to understand the relative risks and benefits in the treatment of heart failure, indicating that lack of knowledge is not the barrier to under-prescribing.

Dr Petty said: "Pharmacists have a lot of expert advice to offer and want to work with GPs on issues like this, to ensure that patients receive the highest possible standards of care and treatment.

"We know these drugs can save lives, so we need to conduct more research to determine why the prescribing rate of beta-blockers for heart failure is exceptionally low in the UK."<sup>3</sup>

## Ends

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### **Notes to Editors**

The British Pharmaceutical Conference - entitled "[The medicines maze: balancing risks and benefits](#)" - takes place from 10th to 12th September, 2007, at Manchester Central (formerly Manchester International Convention Centre). The theme of BPC 2007 is reflected throughout the programme, with keynote speeches and workshops addressing crucial technical and professional issues that are facing pharmacy today. The conference will showcase the latest developments in pharmaceutical science and practice research and include discussion and debate led by expert speakers.

### **References**

1. Bouzamondo A, Hulot J, Sanchez P, Lechat P. Beta-blocker benefits according to severity of heart failure. *European Journal of Heart Failure*. 2003;5:281-289.
2. Ko DT, Hebert PR, Coffey CS, Curtis JP, et al. Adverse effects of beta-blocker therapy for patients with heart failure: a quantitative overview of randomized trials. *Arch Intern Med*. 2004;164(13):1389-94.
3. Leslie SJ, McKee SP, Imray EA, Denvir MA. Management of chronic heart failure: perceived needs of general practitioners in light of the new general medical services contract. *Postgrad Med J*. 2005 May;81(955):321-6.