

Community Medicine Newsletter



Winter 2015

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Featured

Clinical Column by Geoffrey Modest, MD



(article adapted from the BMJ blog "Primary Care Corner with Geoffrey Modest MD")

The American Diabetes Association has suggested that metformin be the initial therapy in all patients with type 2 diabetes, at least in part because it is cardio-protective. One frequent clinical issue is at what cut point in creatinine clearance should metformin be stopped.

JAMA published a systematic review of 65 studies of this issue. The major concern is that metformin is renally-cleared, and that its close cousin, phenformin,

Director's Notes

A Time to Talk and Think....and Eat!!!

Occasionally, I call up one of my colleagues and invite them out to lunch. After setting a place and time to sit and share food, I often experience a touch of hesitation. "Will this be time well spent? I've got so much to do. Is this the best use of our time and attention? Stuff has got to get done, you know. Do I have the time for this?" Afterwards, invariably, I ask myself if the time was well spent: "was it worth the cost, in terms of time and attention to more 'practical' activities?"

It absolutely is.

Of course we ate and talked... and talked...and talked. We also laughed and cringed and shared some emotions. But it was enormously valuable time spent because we both had time to feel connected to a colleague and collaborator. We shared our lives, perspectives and shared our personal and professional aspirations. We agreed and disagreed. We had a chance to think for ourselves and to think out loud with a trusted colleague in a safe environment; sharing a meal outside of the workplace can really facilitate that. We can enhance our connections to each and in doing so, we accessed our own individual and collective creativity. The practice of modern medicine has evolved in to the ultimate Gordian knot and we really need all the trust, collegiality, and, yes, creativity we can muster to take it on and untie it.

So call me and let's go out to lunch.

Warm Regards,
Christopher W. Shanahan, MD MPH FACP
Director, Community Medicine Unit



Network News

Dr. Monica Bharel Named as New DPH Commissioner



Please join us in congratulating Dr. Bharel in her new position at the MA Dept of Public Health! As commissioner, she will oversee programs addressing all areas of public health - from violence prevention to infectious disease control to nutrition, physical activity, and obesity. Congratulations, Dr. Bharel!

was used extensively in the US, caused large numbers of cases of fatal lactic acidosis and was pulled off the market in 1977. Metformin was the chosen biguanide used in Europe during that time.

Major points from the systematic review:

-- Both metformin and lactic acid levels are in safe ranges in patients with eGFR of 30-60 mL/min/1.73m²

--The incidence of lactic acidosis in metformin users is 3-10/100K person-years, "generally indistinguishable from the background rate" EG: there no cases of lactic acidosis in a study with 70,490 patient-years on metformin

--Small studies which have reported "metformin lactic acidosis" have typically been in hospitalized patients with supervening illnesses. It is unclear if the lactic acidosis was related to metformin or the severe illness. when metformin levels were measured, they were occasionally elevated but no consistent correlation with lactic acidosis

--Observational studies suggest macrovascular benefit of metformin in patients with renal insufficiency. EG: a study of 19,691 diabetic patients with atherosclerotic disease found that mortality rates were 6.3% in those on metformin but 9.8% in those not, even in those with eGFR of 30-60 mL/min/1.73m²

Dr. Alex Walley working at the Opioid Treatment Clinic at Bradston Street Methodone Clinic

Formerly at Frontage Road, Dr. Walley has stepped into his role at Bradston Street, running the Opioid Treatment Clinic, which provides regular outpatient care, in addition to patient education about the risks of opioid treatment and discussion of treatment options, opioid use disorder diagnosis, patient eligibility for opioid treatment and monitoring of patient medication doses (including management tactics for handling patients non-compliant with their medication regimen). Keep up all the good work, Dr. Walley!



BUSM & GIM Updates

Recap of 2nd annual Kathy Bennett Memorial Lecture



The standing room only audience was welcomed to The 2014 Kathleen Bennett, M.D. Memorial Lecture in Community Medicine entitled "The State of Community-Based Medical Training and Education" by [Christopher Shanahan, MD, MPH](#), Director of the Community Medicine Unit and organizer of the event. The program was led by

[Angela Jackson, MD](#) (Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Associate Professor of Medicine, Boston University School of Medicine) who provided opening remarks and a critical national perspective. Followed by Dr. Jackson, five Panelists drawn from BMC, BUSM, and the Boston HealthNet each offered their perspectives on this timely topic. The panelists included:

1. [Peter Smith, MD, MSc](#) (Clinician, East Boston Neighborhood Health Center) on the "BMC Joint Hire Program and Community Health Center based Residency Training"
2. [Pamela Cattel, MD](#) (Clinician, South Boston Community Health Center) on "BUSM Medical Undergraduates and the CCHERS Program"
3. [Jennifer Siegel, MD](#) (BMC) on "Community Health Center-based Residency Training and BUSM Medical Student training"
4. [Catherine Rich, MD](#) (BMC - Associate Program Director, Internal Medicine Residency Program) on the "BUSM Primary Care Residency Training Program"
5. [Monica Bharel, MD, MPH](#) (Chief Medical Officer, Clinician, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Health Center and new Mass DPH Commissioner) on the "Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program a "Clinic without Walls"

After the panelists, an engaging discussion and audience commentary moderated by Angela Jackson, MD ensued. Overall, the 2014 Kathleen Bennett, M.D. Memorial Lecture in Community Medicine was a huge success.

--Population-based studies have found that about 25% of patients prescribed metformin have renal dysfunction above the FDA guidelines (creat of >1.5 in men and >1.4 in women)... and no clear increase in lactic acidosis. as a result of the current FDA prohibitions, about 2.5 million people in the US would not be eligible to take metformin. The UK guidelines are to allow metformin if eGFR <60 mL/min/1.73m², with decreasing dosing down to eGFR <30mL/min/1.73m²

--One RCT of 393 patients with creatinine up to 2.5 mg/dL and followed 4 years found no cases of lactic acidosis

For the past 15-20 years, I have been prescribing metformin up to creatinine of 2 in men and 1.7 in women in part for cardioprotection, in part because millions had been on it in Europe with rare cases of lactic acidosis. That being said, I usually use lower doses of metformin anyway (only marginal improvement in diabetic control if use 2 gm/day over 1 gm/day), and many patients respond robustly to 500 mg (or even less, if 500 mg not tolerated).

The authors of the systematic review suggest decreasing the max dose of metformin to 1000mg/day in those with eGFR of 30-45 mL/min/1.73m² range and not use if <30, since very limited data do suggest an increased risk of lactic acidosis at that

Inaugural Joint GIM/BHCHP Grand Rounds

We are please to announce the success of our inaugural Grand Rounds session hosted at Boston Health Care of the Homeless on Weds, Feb 4th, 2015! Drs. Pace and Alford, and Lee Ellenberg gave an engaging & interactive presentation: "Brief Interventions for Unhealthy Substance Use in Primary Care: Overview and Skills Practice". Despite the snowy weather, it was well-attended by both GIM and Health Care for the Homeless faculty. Many thanks to all the parties that made this annual event possible!

Upcoming CMU Grand Rounds

We are also excited to announce the next CMU Grand Rounds in our series:

Date: May 20th, 2015

Time: 6:30-8:00 PM

Location: 801 Mass Ave, 2nd floor, Room 2127

Presentation Title: Addressing the Opioid Epidemic on the Primary Care Front line

Presented by: [Alexander Walley MD, MSc](#)

Assistant Professor of Medicine, BUSM

& [Colleen T. LaBelle BSN, RN-BC, CARN](#)

STATE OBOT B Program Director

Details: Light dinner provided, *RSVP highly encouraged.*

This presentation will present a practical approach to establishing practice-based outpatient-based opioid treatment (OBOT), safe opioid prescribing practices, and over-dose prevention. **The event will be CME-accredited for 1.5 credits.**

RSVPs go to Sarah Brunt: sarah.brunt@bmc.org.

Please join us for what will surely be an engaging presentation on opioid treatment practices in the Community-based Primary Care setting!

Education Corner

Upcoming GIM & DOM Grand Rounds and Ambulatory Rounds

GIM Grand Rounds (CME)

Weds, Jun 3rd @ 8AM-801 Mass Ave, 2nd flr, Rm 2127
"TBD" - presented by TBD

Weds, Jun 10th @ 8AM-801 Mass Ave, 2nd flr, Rm 2127
"TBD" - presented by TBD

GIM M & M Rounds (CME)

Weds, Jun 17th @ 8AM-801 Mass Ave, 2nd flr, Rm 2127
"Ambulatory M & M" - presented by [Julie Crosson, MD](#)

DOM Grand Rounds (CME)

Fri, Mar 27th @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.
"TBD" - presented by [Thanh Nguyen, MD](#) & [Alex Norbash, MD](#)

Fri, Apr 3rd @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.

point.

To be added to his blog list, email Dr. Modest at gmodest@uphams.org.

"Faulker Visiting Professor in Geriatrics: TBD" - presented by [Laura C. Hanson, MD, MPH](#)

Fri, Apr 10th @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.
"Exercise in the Modification of Cardiovascular Risk" - presented by [Gary J. Balady, MD](#)

Fri, Apr 17th @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.
"The Kramer Lectureship: TBD" - presented by [Naga Chalasani, MD](#)

Fri, May 1st @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.
"TBD" - presented by [Christine Hunter, MD](#)

Fri, May 8th @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.
"TBD" - presented by [Joe GN Garcia, MD](#)

Fri, May 15th @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.
"TBD" - presented by [Gregory YH Lip, MD](#)

Fri, May 22nd @12PM-72 E. Concord St, Keefer Auditor.
"TBD" - presented by [Pat O'Gara, MD](#)

DOM M & M Rounds (CME)

Weds, Apr 29th @11:30AM-72 E. Concord St, L-110
"TBD" - presented by TBD

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