

## Major trial shows cardiovascular benefits using new drug combination with perindopril

### ASCOT trial stopped early and is set to change blood pressure treatment

A panel of international experts has halted the blood pressure arm of the Anglo-Scandinavian Cardiac Outcomes Trial (ASCOT)<sup>1</sup> because of substantial benefits in favour of the amlodipine/perindopril-based treatment strategy.

ASCOT is a major multinational trial, involving over 19 000 hypertensive patients from Scandinavia, Ireland and the United Kingdom, that compares the effectiveness of two different treatment strategies in reducing cardiovascular events, including heart attack and stroke. The combination therapy using the calcium channel blocker amlodipine (Norvasc), and the angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor perindopril (Coversyl), was found to offer significant advantages over the beta-blocker atenolol, and the thiazide diuretic bendroflumethiazide, to such an extent that the trial was stopped early.

'The results of the ASCOT trial have been long awaited', commented Professor Peter Sever, Imperial College of London, co-chairman of the steering committee. 'Stopping a trial early because of important cardiovascular

benefits to those patients receiving amlodipine and perindopril is a very exciting outcome and suggests that we need to rethink our hypertension treatment strategies using these newer, more effective treatments.'

Sever said the clear benefits of the amlodipine/perindopril arm was excellent news for patients with hypertension. However, precise figures on its effectiveness will not be available until the full results of the 19 000-patient study, launched in 1997, have been analysed. The preliminary data will be released at the annual meeting of the American College of Cardiology in March 2005 and the results will be published in the *Lancet* thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

These new results show that using amlodipine together with perindopril can produce significant outcome benefits for patients. There is already evidence that amlodipine and perindopril can give benefits when used separately. For example perindopril (Coversyl) was shown to be effective in the EUROPA trial, which demonstrated a risk reduction of 20% in the

combination of cardiovascular death, myocardial infarction and cardiac arrest in a wide range of patients with CHD. Furthermore, results were similar in patients with or without hypertension, with a significant risk reduction of fatal and non-fatal MI of 23.9%, and a significant risk reduction in heart failure of 39.2%. It now seems that ASCOT will extend these exciting benefits to all patients with hypertension.<sup>2</sup>

#### References

1. Sever P, Dahlöf B, Poulter N, *et al.* Rationale, design, methods and baseline demographics of participants of the Anglo-Scandinavian Cardiac Outcomes Trial. *J Hypertens* 2001; **19**: 1139–1147.
2. EUROPA Study Investigators. Efficacy of perindopril in reduction of cardiovascular events among patients with stable coronary artery disease: randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicentre trial (the EUROPA study). *Lancet* 2003; **362**: 782–788.