



For Immediate Release

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Complex Therapy Regimen Affects Health of Millions
New educational tools offer assistance to healthcare providers and patients

Madison, WI (July 16, 2010) Nausea, fatigue, pain in the upper back, neck or jaw, a burning pressure in the chest—these are all symptoms of acute coronary syndrome (ACS), or as most know it, a heart attack.

ACS makes up more than 1.5 million hospitalizations each year in the United States. It is estimated that 38% of those who suffer from an attack will not survive. And unfortunately, those who do survive are at a greater risk for another attack.

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the heart stops due to a blockage in the arteries leading to the heart. These blockages are caused by clots made up of blood platelets. Platelets are beneficial by helping heal wounds, but too many platelets in the blood can be dangerous. Those who have heart disease risk factors including smoking, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, are at greater risk of developing a blood clot.

Antiplatelet therapy is now considered the first line of defense in avoiding a second heart attack due to a blood clot. Antiplatelet medications prevent blood clots from forming easily. Antiplatelet therapy typically consists of two medicines, aspirin and thienopyridines. Both of these medications reduce the formation of blood clots.

Millions of ACS patients are on antiplatelet therapy; however, studies show that 29% of Americans discontinue their medicines before it is safe to do so, 22% take less than prescribed, and 12% never have their prescriptions filled. The results can be devastating and may lead to worsening of ACS, increased mortality, and higher health-care costs. “Understanding the importance of antiplatelet medications and supporting compliance through education and follow-up is a critical role for nurses as they care for patients with heart disease, especially after ACS,” said Kathy Berra, MSN, ANP-C, FAHA, FPCNA, FAAN, Stanford Prevention Research Center, Stanford, CA.

There are many reasons why patients struggle with this drug therapy. They include the stress of having had a heart related event, not understanding the information they are provided about the medications, not having careful and regular follow-up, having memory challenges, and the cost of the medications.

In order to assist healthcare providers in prescribing and counseling their ACS patients, PCNA has developed a quick-reference laminated card for healthcare professionals containing the role of platelets in thrombotic events, site of actions of antithrombotic agents, how to reduce serious side effects such as gastrointestinal bleeding, and information about antiplatelet medications including indications, dosage, side effects, and potential interactions.

PCNA has also created a patient counseling tool which includes an overview of how and why antiplatelet medicines are prescribed, how to take medications, what to expect when taking these medications, what potential side effects to look for, and the importance of eating a heart healthy diet and tips for incorporating exercise every day.

Members of PCNA will receive a copy of the quick-reference laminated card and a tear-pad containing 50 patient education sheets by mail. Healthcare professionals may order 2 tear-pads for free by calling 1-866-620-6947. Please reference product ID 00002000710.

Visit www.pcna.net for information about other clinical and patient education tools available.

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About the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association

The Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA) is the leading nursing organization dedicated to preventing cardiovascular disease (CVD) through assessing risk, facilitating lifestyle changes, and guiding individuals to achieve treatment goals. The mission of PCNA is to promote nurses as leaders in the prevention and management of cardiovascular disease. PCNA does this by educating and supporting nurses through the development of professional and patient education, leadership, and advocacy. For more information, call 1-608-250-2440 or visit www.pcna.net.