

STOP MEDICAL ERRORS

By Dr. Pamela Tronetti, DO, AGSF, Several recent landmark studies report that almost 200,000 patients die every year because of hospital medical errors. Here are a few tips that I recommend to all my patients and their families

1. We are on your side. Enlist hospital workers' help right from the start.

2. You're the watchdog. A family member should be sitting with the patient during his hospital stay. That person gets information as the doctors make their rounds, and asks the questions the patient is too ill to ask. Make notes of test results, names of consulting doctors, even vital signs.

3. Knowledge is power. Have a clear record at your fingertips of all the patient's medical conditions and medications prior to coming to the hospital. Ask for and review a daily printout of what medications are being ordered.

4. Talk to the Dr.. Make sure you have the name and phone number of all the doctors involved. Talk to at least one doctor every day, even if it means calling the office for an update if you miss the doctor's visit. That way you'll know the results of tests that were done and what treatment is planned for the upcoming day.

5. Keep an eye on the basics. Does the patient need her eyeglasses, dentures, hearing aid, walker or cane? Make sure she has everything she uses in day-today life.

6. Eating right. Sometimes patients are admitted either NPO (non per orum — nothing by mouth) or on a clear liquid diet. Ask every day if the patient's diet can be increased so that he can be receiving the right nutrition.

7. Get a move on. Often when patients are admitted, they are placed on bed rest. Ask the doctor each day about increasing activity to prevent muscle wasting and weakness.

8. Better out than in. Some patients have a catheter placed in their bladder on admission. See if this can be removed in a few days to decrease the risk of a bladder infection. Also, make sure the patient

doesn't get constipated. Let the staff know what the patient usually takes at home to prevent constipation and see if it's appropriate in the hospital.

9. Who ya gonna call? Suppose something is going terribly wrong. The patient's pain is not controlled, she's vomiting uncontrollably, or she is suddenly confused. You have talked to the doctor or nurse to no avail. There are still options. Some hospitals have a "rapid response team," whose job is to evaluate serious, sudden changes in hospital patients. You could also involve the Patient Advocate, administrator on call or the chief of staff (the physician in charge of the medical staff).

10. Speak up. The days are past when patients just accepted whatever medical care they got. Speak up if your loved one cannot speak for himself. Get the facts and be part of the team. Adapted from *FLORIDA TODAY*

NATURAL ANTIOXIDANTS FROM TOMATO EXTRACT REDUCE BLOOD PRESSURE.

From: Doug Skrecky:

Potential life extending strategies do not have to depend on controversial ingestion of large numbers of supplements, or starving oneself. The former can be expensive unless care in selection is exercised (eg: vitamin D, niacin), while the latter may even be dangerous, particularly in the aged, where increased caloric intake is actually associated with improved survival.

The cheapest source of tomato antioxidants in most supermarkets, that I could find is canned crushed tomatoes. This is priced the same as canned whole tomatoes, but contains twice as much tomato material. The active ingredient(s) in tomatoes effective in lowering blood pressure are presently unknown.]

BACKGROUND: Treatment of hypertension (HT) can reduce the risk for cardiovascular diseases. Tomato extract contains carotenoids such as lycopene, beta carotene, and vitamin E, which are known as effective antioxidants, to inactivate free radicals, and to slow the progression of atherosclerosis. The purpose of our study was to evaluate the effect of tomato extract on systolic and diastolic blood pressure in grade-1 HT, on serum lipoproteins, plasma homocysteine, and oxidative stress markers.

METHODS: This study is a single-blind, placebo-controlled trial. Thirty-one subjects with grade-1 HT, without concomitant diseases, who required no antihypertensive or lipid-lowering drug therapy, who were recruited from primary care clinics, completed the trial. Subjects entered a 4-week placebo period, then an 8-week treatment period with tomato extract, 250 mg Lyc-O-Mato, and a 4-week control period with placebo. **RESULTS:** Systolic blood pressure decreased from 144 (SE +/- 1.1) to 134 mm Hg (SE +/- 2, P < 001), and diastolic blood pressure decreased from 87.4 (SE +/- 1.2) to 83.4 mm Hg (SE +/- 1.2, P < .05). No changes in blood pressure were demonstrated during placebo periods. Thiobarbituric acid-reactive substances, a lipid peroxidation products marker, decreased from 4.58 (SE +/- 0.27) to 3.81 nmol/mg (SE +/- 0.32, P < .05). No significant changes were found in lipid parameters.

CONCLUSIONS: A short-term treatment with antioxidant-rich tomato extract can reduce blood pressure in patients with grade-1 HT, naive to drug therapy. The continuous effect of this treatment and the long-term beneficial effect on cardiovascular risk factors still need to be demonstrated .PMID: 16368299



