Salt Substitute Cut Disease and Death Rates in Large Trial
A randomized trial recently reported in the New England Journal of Medicine focused on an important question for older adults with high blood pressure or a previous stroke: Can switching from regular salt to a 75% sodium chloride and 25% potassium chloride substitute help protect against stroke, major cardiovascular events, or death?

Conducted in 600 rural villages in China, the trial involved 20,995 participants aged 60 years or older with high blood pressure or a history of stroke. The villages were randomly assigned to the intervention group using the salt substitute or to a control group using regular salt.

After an average of 4.74 years, participants who used the salt substitute had a lower stroke rate than the control group—29.14 events vs 33.65 events per 1000 person-years—the primary outcome measure. They also had lower rates of major cardiovascular events and death. The rates of serious adverse events attributed to hyperkalemia were similar in the 2 groups.

Polypill for Initial Hypertension Treatment Is Promising
Patients with hypertension who started therapy with a single pill composed of 4 low-dose medications achieved greater blood pressure control than those who initiated monotherapy in a phase 3 trial.

The multicenter trial included 591 patients in Australia with an average age of 59 years who were untreated or receiving monotherapy for hypertension. Their average baseline blood pressure was 141/85 mm Hg. Participants were randomly assigned to either the polypill—containing 37.5 mg of irbesartan, 1.25 mg of amlodipine, and 2.5 mg of bisoprolol—or to monotherapy with 150 mg irbesartan, 37.5 mg of irbesartan, 1.25 mg of amlodipine, 0.625 mg of indapamide, and 2.5 mg of bisoprolol. Patients in both groups who did not achieve blood pressure targets could receive additional medication, starting with 5 mg of amlodipine.

By 12 weeks, the intervention group’s systolic blood pressure was 6.9 mm Hg lower than the control group’s, with no difference in serious adverse effects. Seventy-six percent of the polypill group and 58% of the monotherapy group reached blood pressure targets. Fifteen percent of the intervention group required additional blood pressure medication compared with 40% of the control group.

“This new paradigm holds promise for achieving better blood pressure control for people with hypertension around the world,” the study’s authors wrote in The Lancet.

Replacing salt with a salt substitute reduced rates of stroke, major cardiovascular events, and death in a clinical trial in China.

Bacterial Immunotherapy Reduced Kids’ Wheezing
Young children who received daily sublingual bacterial immunotherapy had fewer and shorter wheezing attacks in a phase 3 trial in Spain. Nearly 50% of young children have wheezing attacks, often caused by a rhinovirus or respiratory syncytial virus.

The trial included 120 children younger than 3 years who had 3 or more wheezing attacks during the previous year. The children were randomly assigned to receive a pineapple-flavored investigational immunotherapy called MV130 sprayed under the tongue or placebo daily for 6 months.

In the year following the first dose, the intervention group had a median of 3 wheezing attacks compared with 5 in the placebo group, the researchers reported in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. The agent also shortened the median number of days with attacks from 42 to 19 and the median duration from 7.9 to 6 days. No treatment-related adverse events occurred.

MV130, which includes 6 heat-inactivated gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria, stimulates innate immune cells and enhances T-cell responses to related and unrelated antigens. — Anita Slomski

Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.