

The article by Chrysant et al addresses an issue that primary care physicians face frequently in the daily practice of medicine. In the treatment of hypertension, how does the physician decide to adjust medication when the first-line therapy is not completely effective? These decisions are multifaceted. Effectiveness, side effects, compliance, and cost (an area not addressed in this article) are all areas to be considered when deciding on a course of therapy.

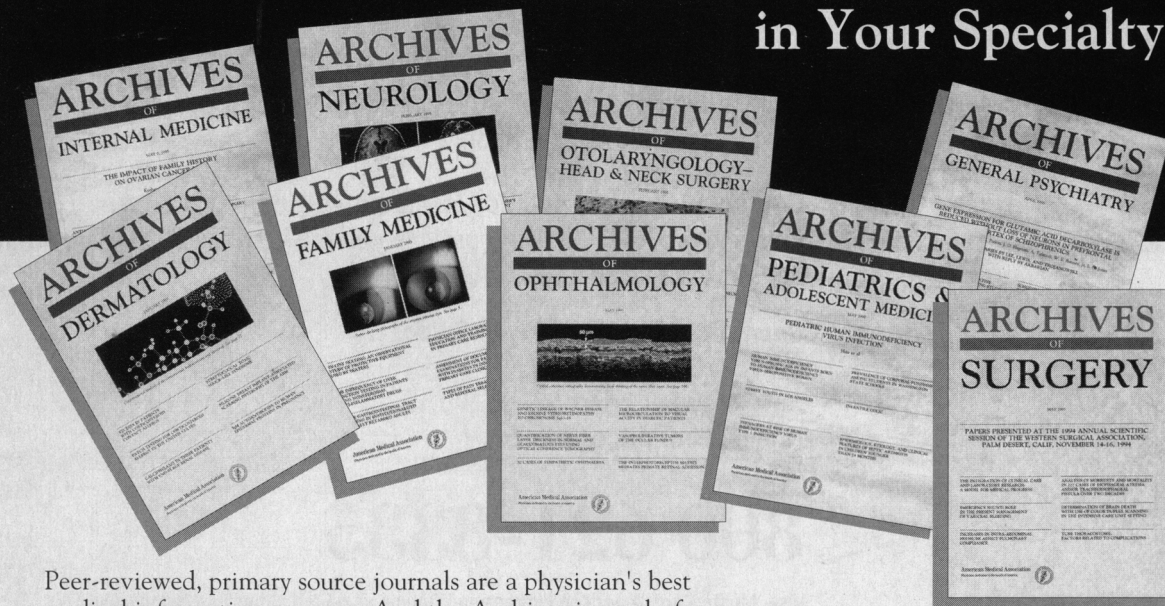
This article is limited by the small number of medications studied. However, the results may indicate a different approach that would be reasonable when adjusting and titrating medicines. There is clear evidence that low-dose combination therapy may be preferable to higher doses of a single agent, with a lower incidence of side effects as the result. With fewer side effects, the likelihood of improved compliance must be a factor in the treatment of hypertension. Patients who are not compliant rarely inform the physician that they have chosen to discontinue their medication without the recommendation of medical personnel. The primary care physician often discovers that this has happened when the patient returns for an unrelated episodic condition and his or her blood pressure is elevated.

Whenever a patient is required to take medication for long-term treatment, cost should be a consideration when deciding on an agent. Efficacy is the primary goal, but cost should be controlled if possible. Ideally, the use of combination therapy should incorporate the use of a second medication without significantly increasing the expense. If this approach lowers the incidence of side effects as well, the benefit is clear.

Now that managed care is gaining increased penetration into the medical marketplace, reducing the number of office visits through greater efficacy and fewer side effects of the right medication becomes a further benefit to the patient as well as the practitioner.

Carl M. Beavers, MD
Bowman Gray School of Medicine
Winston-Salem, NC

Consult the Archives to Stay Ahead in Your Specialty



Peer-reviewed, primary source journals are a physician's best medical information resource. And the Archives journals, from the world's leading publisher of medical information, are the best choice available to gain fresh insights and keep up with the latest advances.

Stay at the forefront
of medicine.

Subscribe today! Call toll-free 1-800-AMA-2350.