Correspondence

Incidence of gastric side effects in controlled trials with unbranded aspirin and with various long-acting aspirin preparations

Sir,

Huskisson and Scott (1978) record an amazingly high incidence of gastric side-effects with 'aspirin' in osteoarthritis, but offer no comment on this nor on the form of aspirin used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>'Aspirin' Incidence</th>
<th>Daily dose (g)</th>
<th>Named aspirin preparations</th>
<th>Gastric side effects</th>
<th>Daily dose (g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huskisson and Scott (1978)</td>
<td>10/16 (62%)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sperryn et al. (1973)</td>
<td>10/21 (48%)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>5/20 (25%)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill et al. (1974)</td>
<td>8/50 (16%)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Billings et al. (1975)</td>
<td>3/20 (15%)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fosdick and Shepard (1969)</td>
<td>48/513* (9%)</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/697* (0.4%)</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dippy et al. (1976)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17/48 (35%)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15/48 (31%)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Patient weeks in a long-term trial.

Few rheumatologists would expect such a high level of gastric side-effects, and most use quality aspirin of known brand rather than 'aspirin' (any old ... and unspecified). A review of a few controlled studies, in which 'aspirin' (any old ... and unspecified) was used, shows a variable incidence of gastric side-effects but none as high as those recorded by Huskisson and Scott.

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References


Thoracolumbar spine abnormalities in rheumatoid arthritis

Sir,

Sims-Williams *et al.* (1977) recently described 6 patients with rheumatoid arthritis and lumbar spinal abnormalities. All patients demonstrated osseous erosion about

Fig 1 Intervertebral disc degeneration (intervertebral osteochondrosis). Note herniation of a portion of the nucleus pulposus into the vertebral body with surrounding bone sclerosis (arrows).
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