Medication LCZ696 for Heart Failure

Who Might Benefit?

Heart failure is when the heart cannot pump and circulate blood through the body as well as it should. Heart failure is caused by damage to the heart muscle due to medical conditions such as a heart attack, diabetes, heart rhythm problems, or high blood pressure. There are approximately 500,000 people in Canada who experience heart failure. Heart failure can cause a person's lungs or lower body to be congested with fluid. This can lead to shortness of breath, weakness, loss of energy, swelling of ankles and feet, and even death.

Current Practice

Heart failure is treated with different types of medications. The intent of the different types of heart failure medications include lowering blood pressure, slowing down the heart, improving blood flow, increasing the strength of heart contractions, and reducing the amount of water collected in the body. The overall goal of medication treatment is to improve symptoms, improve quality of life, and prevent the progression of the medical condition and death. Often people with heart failure will take more than one medication. For some types of heart failure, medical procedures or surgery may be necessary.

> New medication for heart failure may reduce the risk of dying, and improve quality of life

What's New?

A new medication for heart failure has been developed that combines an existing drug (valsartan) along with a new drug (sacubitril). Valsartan is one of several drugs available on the market used to manage heart failure and blood pressure. The new drug, sacubitril, works on a different pathway that increases the levels of substances called natriuretic peptides, which are naturally occurring molecules in the body that decrease blood pressure, heart rate, sodium levels, and the amount of work that the heart needs to do. The drug does this by blocking the effect of an enzyme called neprilysin that breaks down natriuretic peptides. By combining the two drugs into one compound, two pathways are affected that help manage heart failure, which could not be done by giving the sacubitril (neprilysin inhibitor) alone. There is no official name yet for this medication, but its codename is LCZ696.

Potential Advantages

People with heart failure who were treated with this new medication (LCZ696) were found to be 20% less likely to die from heart-related problems than people given current medications that are commonly used to manage heart failure. People given the new medication were also found to be hospitalized less for worsening heart failure and experienced better quality of life compared with patients treated with standard therapy. This new medication may lead to longer and better lives for people with heart failure.