

Bisphosphates, Osteonecrosis and Cardiovascular Disease

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Bisphosphonate induced osteonecrosis of the jaw and in particular of the tooth-bearing areas, is a relatively new but difficult to treat condition. It can be spontaneous, or may be caused by trauma, such as a tooth extraction or dental surgery. Osteonecrosis has also been linked to other antiresorptive or antiangiogenic drugs. [Bisphosphonates are believed to interfere with bone remodeling. Bisphosphonates gained wide popularity and are used extensively, even in cases of mild osteoporosis. The true incidence of bisphosphonate related osteonecrosis of the jaw has not been determined so far. This adverse effect of bisphosphonates took the medical society by surprise. Even now identification of patients who are at risk for developing osteonecrosis, is not possible.

On the other hand, cardiovascular disease is a major public health problem. It is estimated that the prevalence of aortic stenosis will be doubled in the next 20 years. Experimental evidence has demonstrated that bisphosphonates may play a role in the inhibition of atherogenesis. Of course, large placebo-controlled studies are needed to clarify this issue.

In the near future, we may face the same problem (osteonecrosis) in a different group of patients (cardiovascular). In that case, we should not be taken by surprise again.

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