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Anti-Inflammatories - Risks and Benefits

Recently there has been some negative data published about Voltaren, and to a lesser extent Nurofen which implicates them in an increased risk of heart attack.

Unfortunately research now indicates there is increased chance of heart attack with older style AI's such as Nurofen and Voltaren, coupled with the already well known risk with modern AI's such as Vioxx and Celebrex.

Researchers in 2005 analysed data collected from general practices across England, Wales, and Scotland. They analysed data from 9,218 people with first-time heart attacks and compared them to 86,349 patients without heart attacks over a four-year period. They published their results in the *British Medical Journal*.

After allowing for factors like smoking, age, sex, and weight, and the presence of other diseases like diabetes and hypertension, they found patients with heart attacks were much more likely to have been on anti-inflammatory drugs: both COX-2 inhibitors(Vioxx and Celebrex) and older NSAIDs(Voltaren and Nurofen).

Those who had been on Nurofen during that period had a 24% increased risk for having a heart attack, and those on Diclofenac(Voltaren) had a 55% increased chance. This follows only a year after Vioxx was recalled due to its effect on increased heart disease that was published in Lancet. The FDA in the U.S believes up to 27000 heart attacks between 1999 and 2003 could be attributed to Vioxx!

Unfortunately AI's are a great help to many people in pain suffering from arthritic conditions and other musculoskeletal pains. It would seem that a risk/benefit analysis needs to be done on a case by case situation. Certainly the evidence

clearly shows that people need to avoid taking AI's as much as possible, and should avoid taking them on a permanent basis. It is extremely important that people in pain need to talk to their health practitioner and are well aware of both the dangers and benefits in taking AI's for their particular condition.