



An Institute on Aging Publication

APPROVING ADUCANUMAB

FDA's accelerated green light on Alzheimer's Drug raises some questions and concerns

Last month the FDA announced the accelerated approval of Aducanumab, the first Alzheimer's drug aimed at targeting the disease itself – not just the symptoms – in nearly two decades. While this sounds like a promising step forward for many patients and those affected by the disease, many scientists and experts in the field remain somewhat uncertain about the FDA's decision with an independent advisory panel urging them to deny the drugs approval at this time.

"The issue with aducanumab is not so much that we're sure that the drug isn't effective, the problem is that the clinical trials were stopped earlier than they should have been, and the data in support of the drug's effectiveness is incomplete," said David A. Wolk, MD, Director of Penn's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and Co-director of Penn Memory Center.

A RISE IN FATAL FALLS

Seniors' higher risk of deadly falls possibly made worse by the pandemic

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released provisional data suggesting the rate of fall-related deaths among Pennsylvanians over age 65 reached near-highs in 2020 with a 9% increase from the previous year.

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer article covering the findings, geriatric experts believe that "inactivity and isolation during the pandemic may have eroded seniors' strength and overall physical and mental health, all factors associated with falls."

Penn Medicine's Lisa Walke, MD, MSHA, chief of the division of Geriatrics weighed in. "We'll still have some time before we see the full effects," she said. "A lot of things that we know help with decreasing fall risk were either modified, not present, or not accessed by the people needing them."

STATINS AND COGNITION

New studies suggest statins are not linked to dementia or memory changes

Penn Medicine Neurologist Kelly Sloane, MD was featured in a recent article suggesting that contrary to previous research from the 2000s, statins -- a medication used to lower cholesterol -- do not pose a risk to cognition after all.

"When I see patients with concerns about cognition and their memory, we generally look at their medications as a source for reversible causes of impairment," Sloane told TCTMD.com.

"Medication use, and whether they're on a statin, is considered, but the practice has moved away from thinking about statins as a major contributor to cognitive impairment."

These findings were the result of the international Aspirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly (ASPREE) trial.

A TRANSITION IN LEADERSHIP

After nearly two decades of exceptional leadership, John Q. Trojanowski, MD, PhD, has decided to step down as the Director of the Institute on Aging (IOA), effective September 1, 2021.

"While I will remain an active researcher and collaborator within the IOA, I feel that it is the right time to transition leadership. This role has been extremely fulfilling and now it will provide an opportunity for my successor to experience and maintain the same high standards of the IOA." - John Q. Trojanowski, MD, PhD

The IOA is profoundly grateful to Dr. Trojanowski for his many contributions not only to our center, but to aging research as a whole.

Dr. Trojanowski's successor has not yet been named.

