

[IMAGE]

Possible Side Effects Include...

You've probably seen numerous television commercials lately advertising new prescription drugs - advertisements that often include lengthy segments covering possible side effects of the drugs. Although drug therapies may offer cure and relief, negative side effects often accompany therapy. Drugs can even cause death in some cases; adverse drug events (ADEs), or negative side effects from drugs, are one of the six leading causes of in-hospital death in the U.S.

To assess the incidence of death from doctor-administered drugs in a Norwegian hospital and identify patient characteristics that increase odds of drug-related death, the authors of a recent study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* examined approximately 750 in-hospital fatalities over a two-year period. Clinical records, autopsy results, and pre- and post-mortem drug analyses were ascertained to determine death from drug side effects.

Drug-related deaths were directly or indirectly linked with one or more drugs in 18% of the patients. Likelihood of fatal drug use was directly related to increases in age, number of diseases, and number of drugs used. The most dangerous drugs were cardiovascular and anti-clotting drugs, and drugs that stimulate the function of internal organs. Over 200 patients, or 25%, were using 12 or more drugs at the time of death; the average number of drugs per patient increased significantly upon arrival at the hospital.

The authors of this study noted that only eight of these drug-related deaths were reported to the health authorities as required by official regulations. Drugs are often necessary for life-threatening conditions, but if you are making a decision on which drugs you will and will not take for your health, consider the saying "Less is more."

To find out more about the dangers of drugs, check out
<http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general/drugs/index.html>.

Reference: Ebbesen J, Buajordet I, Erikssen J, et al. Drug-related deaths in a department of internal medicine. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 2001;161(19), pp. 2317-2323.

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