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An e-letter for ISU College of Pharmacy Alumni & Friends

Action to Control Cardiovascular Risk in Diabetes *ACCORD study increases knowledge of diabetes, but can help save lives now*

The ACCORD (Action to Control Cardiovascular Risk in Diabetes) study at Idaho State University's Family Medicine Clinical Research Center is increasing knowledge of how to treat and control diabetes.

In the long run, this may help prevent the complications of diabetes that threaten life, limb and vision. In the shorter term, it is helping to save lives now.

The National Institutes of Health chose ISU as one of 80 sites for this prestigious study. ACCORD has 10,800 patients nationwide, 146 of them at ISU. The study started in 2001, will run through 2009 and is sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Diabetics' blood glucose, or blood sugar, levels are too high. Insulin helps glucose get into cells for energy. Diabetics either do not make insulin or their cells do not respond to it appropriately. Without enough insulin, glucose stays in the blood and



ISU College of Pharmacy Professor Rex Force, Pharm.D., counsels a patient at the ISU Family Medicine Clinical Research Center where the Action to Control Cardiovascular Risk in Diabetes (ACCORD) study is underway.

can damage eyes, kidneys and nerves and cause heart disease, stroke and amputation.

ACCORD compares standard control of blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol with intensive control that simulates that of non-diabetics. Intensive control is a goal

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that may or may not be achievable.

“Diabetes is a lifetime illness that we can’t treat with drugs alone,” says Rex Force, Pharm.D., professor with the College and the ISU Family Medicine Residency Program. “It requires lifestyle modifications in diet and exercise. We have learned that diabetes is a progressive illness requiring more and more intensive treatment to control blood sugars.”

Signing up for ACCORD in March 2003 was a life-changing event for diabetic Tom Chopski, a technician at the Idaho National Laboratory, because his heart disease was detected during one of the study’s physical exams.

“I reported my heart problem to Dr. Force during a normal medical review and he insisted I have an EKG,” Chopski says. “That information led me to take a stress test that showed part of my heart was not receiving a proper blood supply, which led to an angiogram, angioplasty and placement of a specially coated stent made for diabetics. As of last review, there was no sign of further blood vessel blockage and the stent was functioning properly.”

“Investigations showed nearly total blockage of one of Tom’s major coronary arteries,” Force says. “It’s possible Tom’s illness may not have been detected as early and not had as successful an outcome without ACCORD.”

Force says working with patients like Chopski is rewarding.

“Their commitment is fantastic. We have had patients develop complications of diabetes, and some have, unfortunately, passed away. When those kinds of things happen, it makes our work that much more important because we are trying help the participants live longer,

healthier and happier lives,” he says.

Chopski is committed to both ACCORD and changing his lifestyle to improve his health. As an ACCORD participant, he receives numerous medicines, supplies to test blood sugar, laboratory monitoring and access to a dietician. But controlling his blood sugar has been difficult – shift work disrupts his sleeping and eating.

Chopski says training and knowledge are as important as the medications.

“I know that in having diabetes I am not alone,” he says. “There are a lot of people to help me with coping with the disease. If I have problems, I am only a phone call away from getting answers to dealing with diabetes or heart disease. You know the disease is not curable, but you can make your life much better by following a few simple eating guidelines along with exercise and proper medications.”

Part of his newly-acquired knowledge is about exercise.

“I had no exercise routine,” Chopski says. “Now I make sure I exercise four or five times a week from a minimum of 20 minutes to a maximum of 40 minutes.”

He says ACCORD has greatly improved his quality of life.

“My general health is better than it was four years ago because I am following the program, which helps me regulate blood sugars through diet, exercise, and medication,” Chopski says. “Those are important, but so is the support group.”

“I hope that reading about me will prompt a person to seek help and assistance in controlling diabetic problems,” he says.

- Glenn Alford - University Relations

**Happy Independence Day
from the faculty, staff & students
at the ISU College of Pharmacy!**