

The Truth  *About Health*

HEARTBURN DRUGS CAN CAUSE SERIOUS RISKS IF TAKEN WITH OTHER DRUGS

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Despite the warnings that were issued about taking night-time heartburn medications with certain drugs, thousands of prescriptions were still dispensed to patients, according to a recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Researchers studied the some 131,485 prescriptions for Cisapride that were dispensed after warnings were issued about dispensing it with other medications.

Researchers found that 4,414 prescriptions that were dispensed overlapped with at least one drug that was mentioned in the warnings. 2,190 of the overlapping prescriptions were prescribed by the same physician for the same patients; 3,908 were dispensed by the same pharmacies for the same patients, and 765 were dispensed on the same day.

Researchers said that most patients with overlapping prescriptions had obtained the drugs from the same pharmacy.

Researchers suggest that a pharmacy-based intervention program could be set up to prevent co-dispensing dangerous drug combinations.

Between 1995 and 1999, four label changes and physician notifications about the adverse reactions of Cisapride were issued.

Cisapride was voluntarily removed from the market in 2000 after some 270 cases of serious irregular heartbeat were reported among U.S. patients — 70 were fatal. Most of the reported cases involved the concurrent use of Cisapride with drugs that interacted with it.

SOURCE: Health Watch Newsletter, WCA, www.wcanews.com, December 2001.