

# Pharmacy Benefit News

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## 3 Drug Classes That Can Cause Raynaud's Disease

A literature review published in the British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology identified 12 total drug classes that can cause Raynaud's disease - a syndrome in which blood vessels constrict more than normal in response to cold temperatures or stress. The resultant lack of blood flow can cause numbness and pain.

In rare cases, blood circulation to fingers and toes can permanently diminish, leading to deformities. In very extreme, untreated cases, amputation may be necessary. Drug-induced Raynaud's is a "probably underestimated drug event," the review authors hypothesized. "Careful monitoring must be made and, if possible, alternative therapies that do not alter peripheral blood flow should be considered," they advised. Pharmacists should alert patients taking the following common drugs about the potential for this side effect:

### 1. Cancer Drugs

- Drugs used during chemotherapy have long been linked to Raynaud's.
- Specifically, cisplatin and bleomycin were most likely to induce the phenomenon, the researchers found.
- Additionally, evidence suggests "a possible involvement of tyrosine kinase inhibitors," such as imatinib (Gleevec), dasatinib (Sprycel), and sorafenib (Nexavar), which may be linked "through an unknown mechanism," the authors wrote.

### 2. Beta-Blockers

- Like chemotherapy agents, beta-blockers have long been associated with Raynaud's because they slow heart rate and lower blood pressure, the researchers noted.

### 3. Migraine Medications

- Migraine medications that contain ergotamine or sumatriptan have been associated with vasoconstriction and subsequently Raynaud's.

Source: [3 Drug Classes That Can Cause Raynaud's Disease](#)

#### **Commentary:**

Raynaud's Disease is most commonly associated with certain cancer drugs, beta blockers and migraine medications. Evidence indicates

that cancer drugs like cisplatin, bleomycin, Gleevec®, Sprycel®, and Nexavar® are major offenders. In addition to medications, the following conditions contribute to Raynaud's Disease.

- Gender
- Age
- Family history
- Living in cold temperatures
- Having certain diseases and conditions that can directly damage the arteries or nerves that control arteries, such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus
- Exposure to workplace chemicals, such as vinyl chloride
- Smoking

The House of Representatives passed the Cures Bill in 2016. The emphasis is on increasing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding. However, many critics point to loosening of potential safety criteria for manufacturers. It is incumbent on health care professionals to enhance our vigilance on potential drug-induced disease in high risk individuals.

## Analytics at Work: A Real World Example

### From Specialty Woes to Positive ROIs

**Problem:** A TPA for physician groups was receiving claims from medical providers for specialty medications. The billed amounts were climbing precipitously and driving at least two of the groups into financial difficulties.

**Solution:** Medical claims were received daily for some groups and monthly for others. One hundred percent of the medical claims were analyzed to determine if the medication was approved for the submitted diagnosis, the dosage was correct, quantity met benefit guidelines, miscellaneous codes were evaluated, etc. Over 75% of claims were denied. The EOB codes indicated the following:

- Medication inconsistent with supplied diagnosis
- Incorrect quantity for dates of service
- Invalid ICD10
- Non-billable ICD10

The analyses allowed for targeting prescribers with the highest number of denials and corrective actions for miscellaneous and non-billable codes. The ROI was minimally 3:1.

Additional information was available for rebatable medications to lower the cost of medications. Genomic testing information was available for determining if the medication was expected to be effective.

The program was effective on the first day and continues to be effective daily and monthly.

[Learn More](#)

### Studies Link Presenteeism to Job Demands

An analysis of data from 61 studies showed presenteeism, or when people go to work sick, was linked to company policies on absenteeism, limited sick leave and requirements for medical certification of illness. The study in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology found heavy workloads, understaffing, deadlines and overtime also were motivators for presenteeism.

Source: [Reuters](#) (11/10)

### "Remnant Cholesterol" is Associated with Increased Cardiovascular Events in Diabetics

Austrian researchers found that remnant cholesterol, calculated by subtracting the sum of LDL and HDL cholesterol from the total cholesterol, can predict the risk of cardiovascular events among type 2 diabetes patients and those without the disease.

The findings, presented at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Conference and based on 1,774 patients with and

**Commentary:**

Pro Pharma has significant experience in predicting presenteeism and absenteeism for employers. Pro Pharma built a model for employers and insurance brokers to use to predict the impact on presenteeism and absenteeism using biometric data. The predictions included the financial impact for the employer.

The model produces lists of target employees with actionable plans for lowering their risks of medical complications and improving presenteeism as well as lowering absenteeism. The results are remarkable and are currently driving improvements in wellness in these organizations.

without diabetes, with a mean age of 63, revealed that CV risk increased by almost 20% for every 1 standard deviation in remnant cholesterol.

Source: [Endocrinology Advisor](#) (4/7)

**Commentary:**

Just because we have metrics does not make it valuable. Every metric, especially medical metrics, must be validated by independent researchers. This is also behind the newer requirements for investigators to provide their data so that journal peer reviewers can validate the results of an individual study. We don't know if the above metric will be validated. If so, perhaps it will be of greater value.

However, the move to higher standard deviations indicates a move to sicker patients. As a result, this metric may turn out to be of value in higher severity patients. If the metric is validated, then this could be very useful in higher severity atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) patients.



Specialty Pharmacy Analyses

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