Acute decompensated heart failure: An introduction

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Chronic heart failure represents a huge burden of illness for Canadians and a significant cost burden for our health care system. Acute decompensated heart failure (ADHF) is a complex clinical syndrome associated with very significant morbidity and mortality. Due to its increasing prevalence, ADHF is gaining increased attention, particularly because of the current and future burden on the health care system. The Canadian Cardiovascular Society consensus guidelines on the management of chronic heart failure (1), and the 2007 update (2), have outlined treatment algorithms to optimize care for patients with ADHF. It is important to recognize the different clinical presentations of ADHF and choose the most appropriate treatment.

Health Canada's recent approval of nesiritide (Natrecor, Janssen-Ortho Inc, Canada) for treatment of hospitalized patients with ADHF constitutes the first specific treatment for ADHF in Canada in recent years and the first in a new drug class called human B-type natriuretic peptide. This new drug class provides another treatment option for this syndrome in addition to the already existing armamentarium of therapeutic agents.

The present supplement provides a comprehensive overview of ADHF and addresses appropriate patient management of this important syndrome.

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