



# Australian Association of Musculoskeletal Medicine

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## Rofecoxib Demonstrates Superiority as Treatment for Symptomatic OA of the Knee

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NEW YORK (Reuters Health) Jan 01 - Rofecoxib (Vioxx) is better than celecoxib (Celebrex) and acetaminophen at relieving pain and other symptoms associated with osteoarthritis of the knee. The finding comes from a study published in the January 2nd issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, sponsored by Merck and Co., Inc., the maker of Vioxx.

Dr. Gregory P. Geba, from Merck in West Point, Pennsylvania, and colleagues compared the efficacy of rofecoxib, celecoxib, and acetaminophen in 382 patients with osteoarthritis of the knee.

The patients were at least 40 years of age and had been treated previously with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or acetaminophen. The patients were randomized to receive rofecoxib at a dose of 12.5 or 25 mg/day, celecoxib 200 mg/day, or acetaminophen 4000 mg/day for 6 weeks.

Acetaminophen-treated patients were more likely to discontinue therapy due to lack of efficacy than patients treated with the cyclooxygenase-2 inhibitors.

In the first 6 days of therapy, both rofecoxib regimens outperformed the other treatments in terms of relief of pain on walking, rest pain, night pain, and morning stiffness. The differences with the 25 mg/day rofecoxib regimen were statistically significant.

Over the entire study period, the 25 mg/day rofecoxib regimen continued to provide significantly better pain relief, reduced stiffness, and improved physical function than the other regimens. All of the regimens appeared to be safe and well tolerated, the investigators note.

"It is possible that a higher dose of celecoxib would have resulted in greater efficacy although previous studies have demonstrated that 200 mg/day is the dose level that provides maximal efficacy in osteoarthritis," the authors point out.

*JAMA* 2002;287:64-71.

*Comment by Vic Wilk: it is dangerous to draw any conclusions from a study sponsored by the manufacturers of one of the competing products. We now await the competing study by Pfizer!! (makers of Celebrex)*