

more than a week apart. The lowest value is then used to determine which quartile the person is in. Even this approach may be insufficient to correct for the variability.

There are outstanding laboratory problems with use of hs-CRP. Not all assays produce identical results. No laboratory has the resources to determine its own reference ranges, so transportability of results between assays is obviously of great importance in defining the concentrations that relate to the different quartiles of basal CRP concentration. At the present time it appears undesirable to attempt to use hs-CRP in individual risk stratification.

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#### FURTHER READING

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*Conflict of interest: none declared*

### Self-test questions

*The following statements are either true or false (answers on page 95)*

5. Ectopic production of cardiac troponins reduces their usefulness in assessing acute coronary syndromes.
6. Measuring high sensitivity C-reactive protein provides an accurate prediction of an individual's risk of cardiovascular disease.

## National Prescribing Service Ltd (NPS) information hotlines

NPS operates two hotlines providing health professionals and the community with information about medicines.

### Therapeutic Advice and Information Service (TAIS): 1300 138 677

**For general practitioners, pharmacists and other community-based health professionals**

The *Therapeutic Advice and Information Service* (TAIS) has been in operation for three years and to date has received more than 15 000 enquiries. The majority of callers were community pharmacists (48%) and general practitioners (35%). The most commonly asked questions were about drug interactions, adverse reactions and therapeutic options.

Information is provided by expert drug information specialists. The service operates Australia-wide, Monday to Friday 9am to 7pm (EST) for the cost of a local call.

### Medicines Line: 1300 888 763

**For consumers**

TAIS is complemented by *Medicines Line*, a medicines information hotline for consumers. *Medicines Line* was launched in September 2002 and receives approximately 1000 calls every month.

Statistics show that most callers are females aged 24–64; 25% of callers ask for information on behalf of a child, partner or parent. Questions often reflect what is being reported in the media at the time and are focused on adverse reactions, interactions, and to a lesser extent the mechanisms of action of medicines. Questions are most commonly related to antidepressants, antihypertensives and complementary medicines.

Information is provided by expert drug information specialists. The service operates Australia-wide, Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm (EST) for the cost of a local call.