

# Diabetes Singapore

## Editorial Team

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George Neo

Advertising Coordinator :

Esther Ng

Publishing Services :

Stamford Press Pte Ltd

Booking for Advertisements :

Tel: 6842 3382

Email: [editor@diabetes.org.sg](mailto:editor@diabetes.org.sg)

Address feedback to:

Managing Editor

Diabetes Singapore

Diabetic Society of Singapore

Blk 141 Bedok Reservoir Road

#01-1529 Singapore 470141

Fax: 68423118

Email: [editor@diabetes.org.sg](mailto:editor@diabetes.org.sg)

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WHERE  
DO WE GO  
FROM HERE?

In recent months, a commonly used synthetic insulin, LANTUS insulin (glargine) has been mired in controversy amidst several reports that showed an association of this condition with an increased risk of cancer. Insulin including LANTUS insulin does not cause cancer by itself but is believed to stimulate existing cancer cells to grow at a more rapid rate. How much of a risk is there? This question is of obvious interest to the millions on LANTUS and other forms of insulin. Yet insulin is life-saving for the type 1 diabetics and many more advance type 2 diabetics as well. Should those on LANTUS insulin switch over to other types of insulin or to oral medications? Is this cancer-causing risk over-sensationalising an unproven association or are we sweeping everything under the carpet and therefore dismissing a potential serious health issue and putting patients at risk?

Let's look at what's out there; a press release from Bristol University on 26 June 2009 headlined "Possible link between insulin glargine and cancer prompts urgent call for more research" versus another recent article (Diabetes Technology and Therapeutics Vol. 11 No. 8, 2009) titled "Insulin Glargine and Cancer - An Unsubstantiated Allegation". The sceptic in us would then ask: "If healthcare experts cannot agree among themselves, where can those with diabetes turn to for answers?"

In this issue of Diabetes Singapore, we dissect the case for and against the use of LANTUS Insulin. I suspect the issue will drag on with no definitive answers until a large dedicated multi-centre controlled clinical trial is launched, which may not happen anytime soon. So, if you are on LANTUS insulin, keep your eyes open and your ears tuned to the ground for future directions.

P.S. Please do not modify or stop your diabetes treatment without first seeking the advice of your healthcare providers. Serious health issues can occur if you change or stop your insulin treatment regimen for your diabetes.

Dr Yeo Kim Teck  
Senior Consultant  
Apple Eye Centre

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