Aspirin and air travellers

To the Editor: In an article in Update, a journal for general practitioners, Singh et al. state that ‘subcutaneous heparin and low-dose aspirin have been recommended as risk-reducing agents for air-travellers at known risk for DVT’. (It is unclear whether this implies heparin and low-dose aspirin or heparin or low-dose aspirin.) However, in an SAMJ article entitled ‘The BEST Study – a prospective study to compare business class versus economy class air-travel as a cause for thrombosis’, Barry Jacobson et al. state that the New Zealand Air Traveller’s Thrombosis (NZATT) study has now reported that ‘aspirin does not prevent travel-associated venous thrombosis’. This latter opinion seems a rational one in light of the fact that aspirin reduces platelet aggregation in arteriosclerotic plaques.

General practitioners are frequently consulted by prospective air travellers as to whether they should use aspirin before and during a flight. The issue is clearly controversial, and it would be helpful to establish consensus. I am accordingly submitting this letter to SAMJ, which enjoys a multidisciplinary and academic readership, hoping to solicit such consensus through these columns.

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