Top Ten Things to Know
Drugs That May Cause or Exacerbate Heart Failure

1. Patients with heart failure (HF) often take multiple medications with complex dosing schedules.

2. HF patients take an average of 6.8 prescription medications per day (10.1 doses a day) not including over-the-counter medications (OTC) or complementary and alternative medications (CAM).

3. This scientific statement offers a comprehensive and accessible resource of information on drugs that may cause or exacerbate HF.

4. Polypharmacy: the chronic use of 5 or more medications. When prescription, OTC medications, and CAM use are considered, universal polypharmacy may be the case in patients with HF.

5. Some of the reasons for polypharmacy may include an increasing number of guideline-directed medications for HF and other comorbidities, and increasing comorbidities as the population ages.

6. Cardiovascular and non-cardiovascular comorbidities are part of the HF.

7. 40% of Medicare patients with HF have 5 or more cardiovascular and non-cardiovascular chronic conditions. 7.6% of the general Medicare population has 3 or more chronic conditions.

8. Medicare patients with HF may see 15 to 23 different providers each year, and this has the potential to increase the number of medications prescribed and the risk for adverse drug events and drug-drug interactions.

9. “Drugs may cause or exacerbate HF by causing direct myocardial toxicity; causing negative inotropic, lusitropic, or chronotropic effects; exacerbating hypertension; delivering a high sodium load, or by drug-drug interactions that limit the beneficial effects of HF medications.”

10. This reference also includes these considerations for better safety and for reducing polypharmacy:
   - Conduct a comprehensive medication reconciliation at each clinical visit and with each admission.
   - Consider evaluating medication complexity.
   - Implement a medication flow sheet and update it at each visit. Include relevant lab tests.
   - Discontinue medications without indications or with contraindications.
   - Evaluate the potential risks and benefits of each medication before starting them.
   - Avoid prescribing new medications to treat side effects of other medications.
   - Educate patients regarding the following aspects of OTC medications and CAM.
   - Establish a team management approach.