

## **Deaths Halt Heart-Drug Trials**

According to an Associated Press report drug-maker SmithKline Beecham has suspended clinical tests of a pharmaceutical designed to fight strokes and heart attacks after a surprising number of patients died while taking it.

The 122 deaths are "totally unexplained," said Dr. Eric Topol of the Cleveland Clinic, who led an independent investigation into Lotrafiban and reported safety concerns to SmithKline Beecham after a weekend review.

All 9,197 patients involved in the Phase III study of Lotrafiban were being notified to stop taking the drug.

"Getting this sort of recommendation, we felt the only responsible course was to close the trial," Rick Koenig, a SmithKline Beecham spokesman, said Tuesday.

Lotrafiban is part of a drug class intended to prevent blood clots that lead to heart attacks and strokes.