Statins May Cut Heart Disease Risk in HIV-Positive People

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Research increasingly suggests that statins can prevent the advancement of coronary atherosclerosis, which is the hardening and narrowing of arteries leading to the heart, among HIV-positive people, aidsmap reports. Two randomized controlled trials presented at the 2015 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Seattle, one concerning Lipitor (atorvastatin) and the other Crestor (rosuvastatin), each found that taking statins will yield such health benefits.

The Lipitor study included 40 HIV-positive people with no signs or symptoms of clinical cardiovascular disease and who had either optimal or close to optimal LDL cholesterol levels. They were randomized to receive one year of Lipitor or a placebo. LDL cholesterol dropped in the treatment group while rising in the placebo arm. Plaque volume dropped 4.7 percent in the Lipitor group while rising 18 percent in the placebo arm. Non-calcified plaque volume dropped by 19.4 percent in the treatment arm and rose 20.4 percent in the placebo group. Sixty-five percent of those treated with Lipitor saw their plaque regress, while 80 percent of those in the placebo group experienced plaque progression.

The Crestor study included 147 HIV-positive people receiving stable antiretroviral treatment who had LDL cholesterol of no more than 3.36 mmol per liter. They were randomized to receive Crestor or a placebo for 96 weeks.

The Crestor group experienced a significant drop in LDL cholesterol when compared with the placebo arm. The level of carotid artery intima-media thickness did not progress in the treatment group, while it did in the placebo arm; this difference was accentuated among those who began the study with coronary artery calcification.

Future research is needed to determine if the apparent beneficial effects of statin use among HIV-positive individuals will translate to reduced rates of cardiac events and fewer deaths.

To read the aidsmap report, click here.

To read the conference abstract for the Lipitor study, click here.

To read the conference abstract for the Crestor study, click here.

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