Statins outperform expectations even after you stop

By ACSH Staff — November 23, 2011

A recent study published in *The Lancet* finds that taking a statin to lower levels of cholesterol especially the bad type, LDL provides long-term benefits with low levels of risk. Researchers from the Heart Protection Study Collaborative Group in the U.K. randomized over 20,000 patients with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease to receive either 40 mg of simvastatin daily or a placebo over a period of about five years. As expected, patients taking the statin lowered their LDL cholesterol levels and reduced their risk of heart attack and stroke risk by almost one quarter during the study period.

What was even more impressive was that these risk reductions continued [1] for several years post-trial, even among those patients who had discontinued statin treatment. Researchers continued to follow the patients for another six years after the study and found that significant reductions in the risk of heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases, including heart failure, continued among those who had received simvastatin during the initial five-year trial period. Additionally, there were no hazards associated with use of the medication no increased risk of cancer or non-vascular mortality was found.

ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross is pleased but not surprised by the study results, noting that many other studies have shown statins to be safe and beneficial for patients with cardiovascular risk factors. Considering that all statins work in essentially the same way, he says, it’s quite reasonable to expect that other members of this class of drugs would yield similar results. He agrees with the study’s authors, who conclude that the results provide further support for the prompt initiation and long-term continuation of statin treatment in people at increased risk of vascular events.

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