

Elderly have Highest Rate of Statin Use



According to new research published by *JAMA Internal Medicine*, the use of statins for primary prevention in patients without vascular disease between 1999 and 2012 significantly increased among the elderly despite the fact that there is no evidence to recommend the use of these drugs in this particular patient segment.

The study was conducted by Michael E. Johansen, MD, MS, of Ohio State University, Columbus, and Lee A. Green, MD, MPH, of the University of Alberta, Canada and investigated the use of statins among this population segment by vascular disease. The elderly have the highest rate of statin use in the U.S. Data from the 1999-2012 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey was analysed and included 13,099 individuals over the age of 79.

For the purpose of the study, primary prevention was defined as individuals without any vascular disease (CHD, stroke or peripheral vascular disease) while secondary prevention was defined as individuals with vascular disease.

The findings show that vascular disease in this patient population increased from 27.6 percent in 1999-2000 to 43.7 percent in 2011-2012. Statin use among individuals taking them for primary prevention increased from 8.8 percent in 1999-2000 to 34.1 percent in 2011-2012. With respect to the three main statins atorvastatin, simvastatin and rosuvastatin, use of atorvastatin peaked in 2005-2006 and then declined; use of simvastatin was steady until 2007-2008 after which it increased; use of rosuvastatin increased steadily since it was introduced.

“Although the medical community has embraced the use of statins for primary prevention in the very elderly, caution should be exercised given the potential dangers of expanding marginally effective treatments to untested populations,” the authors conclude.

Source: [JAMA Internal Medicine](#)

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