

Memory Loss Associated with Cholesterol-Lowering Drugs



According to an article published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, both statin and non-statin cholesterol lowering drugs were associated with memory loss in the first thirty days patients started taking the medications.

Acute memory loss has previously been found to be associated with the use of statins but findings about this association have been inconsistent to date. Some studies found no effect on memory while others found an improvement.

The study was conducted by Brian L. Strom, MD, MPH, of Rutgers University, Newark, N.J., and co-authors. The researchers used The Health Improvement Network (THIN) database that comprises of primary medical records from general practitioners in the United Kingdom and compared 482,543 statin users with two control groups: 482,543 nonusers of any lipid-lowering drugs (LLDs) and 26,484 users of non-statin LLDs (for example, cholestyramine, colestipol hydrochloride, colesevelam, clofibrate, gemfibrozil, fenofibrate and niacin). The researchers also conducted a case-crossover study of 68,028 patients with incident acute memory loss and evaluated the effect of statins during the period immediately before the outcome versus 3 earlier periods.

The findings of the analysis show that as compared to nonusers of any LLDs, patients on statins had an increased risk of memory loss during the first 30 days of the start of the medication. In addition, patients on non-statins also had a higher risk of memory loss during the first 30 days as compared to nonusers. The authors did not find any such association when they compared patients on statins versus patients on non-statin LLDs.

However, the authors point out that the association may have resulted because patients on these medicines may have been more in contact with their physician and that is why the decline in memory loss was more easily detected. 'This finding suggests that either all LLDs cause acute memory loss, or perhaps more likely, that the association is the results of detection bias,' the study concludes. In other words, it may be possible that memory loss was ascertained in patients receiving such preventive therapy because they are more in touch with their physicians.

Source: JAMA Network Journals

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