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## Negative Statin Stories Impact Patients



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According to a study published in the *European Heart Journal*, negative news stories about statins result in some people choosing to discontinue their statin treatment which in turn increases their risk of heart attacks and dying from heart disease.

The research was conducted by researchers in Denmark and included 674,900 people aged 40 and older who were using statins between January 1995 and December 2010. Patients were followed up to the end of 2011. 1931 statin-related news stories published in Danish newspapers, magazines, radio, television, websites and news agencies were identified from January 1995 onwards. News stories were graded as negative (110 stories), neutral (1090 stories) and positive (731 stories).

Statins are one of the safest drugs available today. Side effects caused by these drugs usually appear within the first six months and can lead to early discontinuation. The goal of this research was to determine whether exposure to negative news stories about statins plays a role in the patients' decision to continue or discontinue their use. The researchers also investigated the link with having cardiovascular disease or diabetes at the time the statins were first prescribed, the year, the dose, gender, location and ethnicity.

See also: [To Statin or Not to Statin](#)

From 1995 to 2010, the number of people on statins increased from less than one percent to 11 percent. Statin discontinuation increased from 6 percent to 18 percent and the number of statin-related news stories increased from 30 per year in 1995 to 400 in 2009.

The findings show that there was a nine percent increased risk of people discontinuing their statin treatment within six months of being prescribed the drugs with every negative nationwide news story published about statins.

"We found that exposure to negative news stories about statins was linked to stopping statins early and explained two percent of all heart attacks and one percent of all deaths from cardiovascular disease associated with early discontinuation of statins," said Professor Børge Nordestgaard, Chief Physician at Copenhagen University Hospital in Denmark.

The study researchers point out that people who stop their statin treatment have a 25 percent increase in their risk of a heart attack and an 18 percent increased risk of dying from cardiovascular disease as compared to patients who continue to use the drugs. While this type of association research cannot specifically prove causality, the data does suggest that early discontinuation of statins could lead to unnecessary heart attacks and deaths.

The findings also show that the risk of early statin discontinuation increased per increasing calendar year (4%), increased daily dose (4%), being male (5%), living in cities (13%) and for being of non-Danish ethnicity (67%). Discontinuation risk decreased after exposure to positive news and having cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

See also: [New Cholesterol Guidelines Offer Greater Accuracy](#)

Prof Nordestgaard explains that statins are the most effective way to prevent cardiovascular disease but they can only be effective if patients adhere to their prescribed therapy. Discontinuing therapy at an early stage represents a major problem for the overall cardiovascular health of patients. There is thus a need to develop ways of ensuring that patients adhere to statin therapy during the first six months. He points out that if negative statin-related news stories did not exist at all, there would be a decrease of 1.3 percent of early statin discontinuation in the whole of the population.

Source: [European Journal of Cardiology](#)

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