

Dr. Cosmina Popa
Sacred Heart Hospital Allentown

Role of Statins in the progression of Alzheimer's Dementia

ABSTRACT

Background

Currently, there is a lot of controversy and mixed evidence regarding the role of statins in cognitive decline. Several previous studies showed a protective role of statins, while other randomized trials failed to show any cognitive benefit at all. In light of the latest FDA warning regarding statins causing memory loss or impairment, we have raised the following question: What is the role of statins in cognitive decline in our elderly population with dementia?

Methods

This is a retrospective observational study, which took place in a community-based Neurology Geriatric practice. The study population was elderly (65 years and older) with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's dementia. There were 76 eligible patients; 41 female and 35 male. The population was divided into two groups; patients taking Cholinesterase Inhibitors (CEI) and those who did not. Each group was then divided into two subgroups; Statin and Non-statin users. All participants had cognitive evaluations performed every 12 months. MMSE and FAB (Frontal Assessment Battery) scores were recorded initially, and followed yearly, for at least two consecutive years. We observed the numerical decline in these scores for every patient per year.

Results

Overall, 55% of the patients took statins, and 63% of the patients were on a CEI at any time during the study.

In the CEI group; 30% of the people taking statins had a 2 point decline on the MMSE per year, 30% had a 4 point decline on the MMSE per year, 30% had a 2 point decline on the FAB; whereas in those not taking statins, more than a 6 point decline per year was observed in 24% of patients on the MMSE and 19% on the FAB.

In the Non CEI group; of those taking statins, 26% had a 2 point decline on the MMSE, and 34% had a 2 point decline on the FAB. Of those patients not on a statins or CEI, 38% had a 2 point decline, and 46% had a more than 6 point decline on the MMSE. Also, 31% had no decline, 23% had a 1 point decline and 23% had a 6 point decline on the FAB.

Conclusion

According to our observational study, the use of statins was not associated with the progression of cognitive decline in Alzheimer's disease. These results add to the emerging data that statin use have a protective effect on cognitive outcome. Until more conclusive evidence arises, we feel comfortable continuing treatment with statins in the elderly with Alzheimer's dementia.