PHARMACOTHERAPY

No link found between statins and risk of cancer

Statins do not increase the risk of incident cancer, according to the report of a retrospective cohort analysis conducted in the USA. Statins are widely prescribed for the management of dyslipidemia and atherosclerosis, and to reduce the risk of cardiovascular events; however, the “debate on the association of statins with cancer” motivated Dr Candace Gunnarsson and co-workers to undertake this investigation.

Propensity matching was used to pair 45,857 patients who were taking a statin and whose medical records were available in the US General Electric Centricity national database, with the same number of patients who were not receiving statin therapy, but who shared similar propensities for statin use. The average duration of follow-up was 4.7 and 4.6 years, and the incidence of cancer was 11.37% and 11.11% in each group, respectively (HR 1.04, 95% CI 0.99–1.09).

No particular cancer type predominated, and Kaplan–Meier curves for diagnosis of any cancer up to 10 years showed no difference between patients taking a statin and those who were not. This finding is consistent with the lack of a proposed carcinogenic mechanism for statins.

Future avenues of inquiry include whether the type of statin, combination use of a statin with other drugs, or duration of statin therapy affect cancer risk. Dr Gunnarsson is keen to “turn operational data [for example from government databases] into real-world evidence for actionable clinical decision-making.”

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Original article Marelli, C. *et al.* Statins and risk of cancer: a retrospective cohort analysis of 45,857 matched pairs from an electronic medical records database of 11 million adult Americans. *J. Am. Coll. Cardiol.* 58, 530–537 (2011)