

Statins Shown to Lower Blood Pressure

April 14, 2008

Debra Kain

A large, randomized drug trial has shown for the first time that statin drugs result in a modest, but significant, reduction in blood pressure. These effects may contribute to the reduced risk of stroke and cardiovascular events reported for patients on statins, according to lead investigator Beatrice Golomb, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of medicine at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and director of UC San Diego's Statin Study.

The results of the double-blind, placebo-controlled study of 973 men and women in Southern California will be published in the April 14 edition of the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

"Statins, of course, are known to lower LDL cholesterol levels, but lower LDL cholesterol levels are not generally linked to lower occurrence of stroke," said Golomb. "However, lower blood pressure is strongly related to lower stroke risk, and these findings provide one means by which statins may reduce rates of stroke and other cardiovascular events in patients."

Study participants had no known cardiovascular disease or diabetes. Equal numbers of participants were either given 20 milligrams of simvastatin, 40 milligrams of pravastatin or a placebo daily for six months. Reductions in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure readings occurred in patients taking both simvastatin and pravastatin, two forms of statin drugs.

"We found that statins lower both systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and that the effect extends to patients with pre-hypertension, those with normal blood pressure and persons not on blood-pressure lowering medications," said Golomb. "While reductions in blood pressure with statins were measurable as early as one month into the trial, the lowered blood pressure was significant at six months."

Additional contributors to the study include Joel E. Dimsdale, M.D., UCSD Department of Psychiatry; Michael H. Criqui, M.D., MPH, UCSD Department of Family and Preventive Medicine; and Janis B. Ritchie, BSN, UCSD Department of Medicine.

Media Contact: Debra Kain, 619-543-6163