



Statins May Reduce Risk for Certain Cancers



Results from a study presented at the 39th annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology in June revealed that cholesterol-lowering

statin drugs are associated with a 20% reduction in cancer risk. The study examined the risk of incident cancer in patients using statin drugs compared to other cardiovascular medications.

Researchers identified 3,080 people with cancer and 16,711 controls with no signs of cancer in eight Dutch cities. After adjusting for diabetes mellitus, number of hospitalizations, comorbidity, and use of other medications and sex hormones, the researchers found that, overall, people who used statins were 20% less likely to have cancer. The reduction in risk was statistically significant only for prostate cancer and renal carcinoma.

The study found that only people who took statins for more than four years had a statistically significant reduction in cancer risk. Those who took statins for less than four years showed no reduction. In addition, only people who took more than 1,350 daily doses of statins had a significant reduction in risk. People who stopped taking statins returned to their baseline risk within six months.

Statins are believed to reduce risk by inhibiting the 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-coenzyme A reductase. This helps to reduce the biologic activity of RAS and other oncogenes. Statins also can trigger apoptosis.

The researchers cautioned that results should be interpreted carefully because patients taking statin drugs also might have undergone heart-healthy lifestyle changes such as following a low-fat diet and quitting smoking.

Treatment for Hodgkin's Disease May Increase Risk for Breast Cancer

A major study by researchers from the National Cancer Institute found that women treated with high-dose radiation for Hodgkin's disease have an exceptionally high risk for developing breast cancer for about 25 years after treatment.

The study followed 3,817 women aged 30 or younger who were treated for Hodgkin's disease from 1965–1994 and discovered that breast cancer risk was related

directly to radiation exposure, in that the women who received higher doses had a higher breast cancer risk. The researchers estimated that 83 of 1,000 women whose breasts were exposed to 40 Gy would develop breast cancer within 25 years. This was compared to 42 of 1,000 who would develop the disease after exposure to 20 Gy, and 21 of 1,000 who would develop breast cancer after exposure to 10 Gy.

Device Found to Detect Cancer Painlessly

TRIMprob (tissue resonance interferometer probe), a new device developed by Galileo Avionica (Turin, Italy), holds promise for aiding in early, painless cancer detection. TRIMprob is a thin, 30 cm-long probe that emits coherent electromagnetic waves. When these waves hit biologically altered tissue, interference occurs. The interference is recorded and interpreted and can be used as a tool to detect cancer and other diseases, such as vascular disease, joint and bone diseases, muscle

injuries, inflammatory conditions, and fibromas.

TRIMprob can be used while patients are fully dressed. Currently, the probe is being used to help detect prostate, breast, and stomach cancer in patients in Italian hospitals. Studies currently are under way to detect diseases of the lungs and liver. Future studies are planned for detecting thyroid, uterine, pancreatic, and heart diseases.

For more information, visit www.galileoavionica.it/trim_co_inf.htm.

Study Assesses Physicians' Knowledge of Low-Cost Drug Programs

A recent survey of specialists treating patients with no prescription coverage found

that these physicians lacked awareness of patient assistance programs. The survey, conducted by the Coalition for Healthcare Communication and sponsored by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufac-



turers of America (PhRMA), confirms the need to help physicians understand how to help patients with low incomes gain access to medication at low or no cost.

The survey of neurologists, psychiatrists, oncologists, and pulmonologists indicated that these physicians believe that the phar-

maceutical industry has done a good job developing drugs that prolong life and improve quality of life. However, they indicated that the industry was not as successful in explaining why drugs cost as much as they do, promoting awareness of existing programs, and making the programs easily accessible.

PhRMA offers a free brochure containing information on how patients can gain access to free or low-cost prescription medications. To request a copy, call 800-901-2716.

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/03.CJON.623-624