In People With Hep B, Statin Use Is Tied to Reduced Liver Cancer Risk

Researchers analyzed cancer outcomes among a large group of South Koreans with hepatitis B virus.

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The use of cholesterol-lowering statin medications among people with hepatitis B virus (HBV) is independently associated with a lower risk of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common form of liver cancer, Healio reports.

Publishing their findings in Hepatology, a research team led by Myung Ji Goh, MD, of Sungkyunkwan University School of Medicine in South Korea, analyzed data on 7,713 people with HBV, including 713 people who took statins and 7,000 who did not.

The cohort members were defined as using statins if they took at least 28 cumulative daily doses during the study's follow-up period.

Compared with those not on statins, those taking them tended to be older and were less likely to have cirrhosis (severe liver scarring) or a raised HBV viral load and more likely to have diabetes and high blood pressure.

During a median follow-up period of 7.2 years, 672 people not taking statins and 30 people taking them were diagnosed with liver cancer. After a five-year period, a respective 7.9% and 3.3% of each group developed liver cancer.

After adjusting the data to account for various differences between the participants, the researchers found that statin use was independently associated with a 64% lower risk of developing liver cancer. The risk of liver cancer was lower for statin users regardless of whether they had cirrhosis, diabetes, raised HBV viral load or high cholesterol.

The degree of the association between statin use and liver cancer risk reduction was dependent on how many cumulative daily doses of statins individuals had taken. Taking 28 to 365, 366 to 730, 731 to 1,095 and greater than 1,095 cumulative daily doses was associated with a 37%, 49%, 68% and 83% reduced risk of liver cancer, respectively.

The study was limited by the fact that it included only Koreans with HBV, who primarily have

genotype C. Nevertheless, the study authors believe their findings justify further research into the potential anticancer effects of statins among people with hep B.

To read the Healio article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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