Statin Use Linked to Reduced Risk for Liver Cancer Recurrence

Use of cholesterol-lowering medications was also associated with reduced mortality from liver cancer and other causes.

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Cholesterol-lowering statin drugs were associated with a reduced risk for recurrence and mortality in people who underwent liver transplantation after a diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common type of liver cancer. These results appeared in Liver Transplantation.

“Although clinicians often hesitate to use statins because of their potential hepatotoxicity, our study provides compelling evidence that HCC patients who undergo liver transplantation would benefit from statin use to improve their overall clinical outcomes,” wrote Hae Lim Lee, MD, of the Catholic University of Korea, and colleagues.

Lee’s team conducted a study to assess the impact of statin use on the risk for liver cancer recurrence in people undergoing a transplant for hepatocellular carcinoma.

The researchers enrolled 430 individuals who received a liver transplant to treat HCC between 1995 and 2019. One fourth of the study population (107 individuals) were prescribed statins to prevent cardiovascular disease, while the remaining 323 individuals did not use statins.

Statin use was associated with a lower risk for liver cancer recurrence as well as mortality from liver cancer and other causes. Further, as the statin dosage increased, the risk for liver cancer recurrence fell.

Over an average follow-up period of 65 months, 79 people (18%) had their cancer recur, with 72 instances occurring among statin nonusers, compared with just seven cases among statin users.

A total of 111 individuals (26%) died during study follow-up, with 98 deaths among statin nonusers and 13 deaths among statin users. Of the 111 people who died, 53 (48%) did so due to liver cancer.

“Statin use significantly reduced the risk of HCC recurrence and improved the survival of patients who underwent liver transplantation for HCC,” the researchers concluded.

Click here to read the study abstract in Liver Transplantation.

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