

## Risk of Prostate Cancer Linked to Cholesterol Medication

Sunday, 26 Apr 2009

New York - A major scientific study found that the risk of prostate cancer may be reduced in those taking medications to lower their cholesterol. A group of almost twenty-five hundred men were studied for fifteen years by a group from the Mayo Clinic. Looking at the rate of development of prostate cancer, erectile dysfunction, and benign enlargement of the prostate the study found that statin medication which are used to lower cholesterol also reduced the risk of these problems.

The findings presented at the meeting of the American Urological Society in Chicago showed that men taking drugs such as Pfizer's Lipitor and AstraZenica's Crestor were two to three times less likely to develop prostate cancer than men not on these drugs. The drugs, a class of medications known as statins, are prescribed to lower serum cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease

. Not only was the risk of prostate cancer reduced but levels of prostate specific antigen or PSA, a serum marker for prostate cancer was lower in men taking statin medications.

A reduction in the incidence of benign prostatic hypertrophy, an enlargement of the prostate that can make urination difficult or painful was also found in this study. The incidence of erectile dysfunction was also reduced. Statins are known to cause a generalized reduction in inflammation. It is perhaps by this mechanism that all three benefits are achieved in addition to the benefit of lowering the risk of heart disease and heart attack. When it was necessary to perform prostate biopsies the degree of inflammation was less in the men on a statin drug than found in those not taking the medication.

Prostate cancer is the leading malignancy in men and the second most deadly. While other randomized controlled trials need to be done to verify these benefits this is promising news for those at an increased risk of cancer and other prostate problems. One of the cautions of this study is the fact that due to the location in which it was performed all the study participants were Caucasian. These data cannot be extrapolated to men of other backgrounds.

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