

Cholesterol-lowering drugs may not prevent Alzheimer's disease

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Contrary to some reports, taking statins, which are cholesterol-lowering drugs, offers no protection against Alzheimer's disease, according to research published in the January 16, 2008, online issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

The study involved 929 Catholic clergy members who were an average of 75 years old, free of dementia at the beginning of the study and enrolled in the Religious Orders Study, an ongoing study of aging and Alzheimer's disease. All of the participants agreed to a brain autopsy at the time of their death and underwent annual cognitive tests for up to 12 years.

At the beginning of the study, 119 people were taking a statin. During the 12-year follow-up period, 191 people developed Alzheimer's disease, of whom 16 used statins at the start of the study.

“Some studies have suggested people taking cholesterol-lowering drugs are less likely to have Alzheimer's disease, but our longitudinal findings found no relation between statin use and Alzheimer's,” said study author Zoe Arvanitakis, MD, MS, Associate Professor of the Department of Neurological Sciences at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and member of the American Academy of Neurology. “The study also found no association between taking statins and a slower cognitive decline among older people.”

In addition, researchers performed brain autopsies on more than 250

people who died during the study to examine the relation of statins to Alzheimer's disease pathology and stroke in the brain, the two common pathological causes of dementia. The study found statin use at any time during the course of the study had no effect on pathology of Alzheimer's disease or strokes.

Arvanitakis says the study is limited in that there were relatively few statin users among those who died. She says future studies will need to look at the possibility of associations of statins with other pathologic changes of Alzheimer's disease not examined in this study.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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