

Cholesterol drugs might boost kidney cancer survival

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Study finds statin medications tied to lower death risk after nearly 4 years of follow-up.

(HealthDay)—Cholesterol-lowering statin drugs that are taken by millions of Americans might also improve survival from a type of kidney cancer called renal cell carcinoma, a new study suggests.

Statins—drugs such as [Crestor](#), Lipitor, Pravachol and [Zocor](#)—have anti-inflammatory and cell self-destruction properties, and previous research has shown that these drugs may lower the risk of developing some [types of cancer](#). The new research, presented Tuesday at the annual meeting of the American Urological Association in San Diego, suggests that the drugs might fight kidney cancer.

"Given that one in four Americans over 45 years of age take a statin and

renal cell [carcinoma](#) occurs most often in men ages 50 to 70, it may be prudent to prospectively evaluate if statins protect against [cancer] progression," study author Dr. Scott Eggener, an associate professor of urologic oncology at the University of Chicago, said in a meeting press release.

One expert not connected to the study wasn't surprised by the findings.

"The use of statins has shown promise in previous studies with reducing overall cancer-related mortality," said Dr. Michael Palese, an associate professor of urology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, in New York City. He added that certain characteristics of renal cell carcinomas might render statins "beneficial" for patients.

In the study, Eggener's team reviewed data from more than 900 patients who had surgery for [renal cell carcinoma](#) between 1995 and 2010. After an average follow-up period approaching four years, statin use was associated with a reduced risk of [cancer progression](#), the team reported.

Over three years, 10 percent of the patients who took statins died of their cancer, compared with 17 percent of those who did not take this type of drug.

After accounting for other factors, the researchers concluded that statin use was independently associated with both improved overall survival and disease-specific survival.

Another expert said the finding echoes those seen in other studies involving cancer patients.

"Last year in a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Danish researchers studied 13 different cancers and found that in all types, the use of statins was associated with longer cancer specific

survival," said Dr. Manish Vira, director of the fellowship program in urologic oncology at North Shore-LIJ's Arthur Smith Institute for Urology in Lake Success, N.Y.

But he stressed that the data so far come from observational trials, which can prove an association but not a cause-and-effect relationship between statin use and improved survival.

"Given the current data and known cardiovascular protective effects of statins, certainly it seems prudent to design clinical trials to study the potential of statin therapy in breast, colon, prostate and now [kidney cancer](#) treatment," Vira said.

Studies presented at medical meetings are typically considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: Find out more about renal cell carcinoma at the [U.S. National Cancer Institute](#).

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