

Cholesterol-lowering drugs may reduce cardiovascular death in Type 2 diabetes

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July 16, 2014 – Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death and disability among people with Type 2 diabetes. In fact, at least 65 percent of people with diabetes die from some form of heart disease or stroke, according to the American Heart Association.

However, a new study by researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center suggests that the use of cholesterol-lowering statins may help prolong the lives of people with diabetic [cardiovascular disease](#).

The study is published in the current online edition of *Diabetes Care*.

"Although our study was not a clinical trial, it did show that people with diabetes and [heart disease](#) can still live quite a few years by taking statins," said Don Bowden, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry at Wake Forest Baptist and lead author of the study.

The research team studied data from 371 patients who had participated in the Diabetes Heart Study. At the beginning of the study, the participants received a CT scan to determine their levels of [coronary artery calcium](#) (CAC); a CAC score greater than 1,000 indicates an increased risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The team compared the baseline characteristics of 153 patients who died during an average 8.2 years of follow-up and 218 who survived. The researchers assumed that risk for mortality would be consistently high among the study participants. However, 60 percent were still living after

more than eight years.

The use of cholesterol-lowering statins at the baseline exam was the only modifiable risk factor identified to be protective against mortality. The participants taking statins at the beginning of the study had a 50 percent increase of being alive as compared to those who didn't.

Bowden said this highlights the importance of widespread prescription of cholesterol-lowering medications among individuals with Type 2 [diabetes](#) who have existing high CVD risk, but added that in previous studies the rates of statins prescribed for diabetic patients have been low.

"These data suggest that cholesterol-lowering medications may be used less than recommended and need to be more aggressively targeted as a critical modifiable risk factor," he said.

Provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

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