Simvastatin reduced mortality and vascular events in diabetes mellitus


**Question**
In patients with diabetes mellitus, does simvastatin reduce vascular events?

**Design**
Randomized [allocation concealed*]†, blinded [participants, clinicians, data collectors, and outcome assessors]†, placebo-controlled trial with mean 4.8-year follow-up.

**Setting**
[69 U.K. hospitals]‡.

**Patients**
5963 patients who were 40 to 80 years of age (mean age 62 y, 70% men); had nonfasting blood total cholesterol levels ≥ 3.5 mmol/L; and had a medical history of diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, occlusive disease of noncoronary arteries, or treated hypertension (if also male and ≥ 65 y of age). Exclusion criteria included indications or contraindications for statin therapy; myocardial infarction, stroke, or admission for angioplasty in the previous 6 months; chronic liver disease; severe renal disease; and life-threatening conditions other than vascular disease or diabetes. >99.5% of patients had complete follow-up.¶‡

**Main results**
[Analysis was by intention to treat.]†† Patients in the simvastatin group had fewer coronary events, strokes, revascularization procedures, and major vascular events (Table).

**Main outcome measures**
Coronary events (myocardial infarction or coronary death), stroke, revascularization, and major vascular events (major coronary events, strokes, and revascularizations).

**Commentary**
Heart Protection Study (HPS) participants were selected for having a high risk for cardiovascular disease, not for having high low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels. 2463 of the 5963 participants who had diabetes also had a history of vascular disease at baseline; 2426 had pretreatment LDL levels < 3.0 mmol/L. The most important result was that a standard 40 mg daily of simvastatin (not treatment to target cholesterol levels) reduced LDL levels by about 1 mmol/L on average, and reduced major cardiovascular events by 22% in all diabetic participants. In an extensive subgroup analysis, treatment benefit differed little across age, sex, type of diabetes, duration of diabetes, degree of glucose control, baseline cholesterol level, or presence of known vascular disease.

The study by Collins and colleagues adds weight to the mounting evidence that treating diabetes with a statin can reduce the risk for major cardiovascular events, even though the most common lipid abnormality in diabetes is a combination of low high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and high triglyceride levels (a marker for small dense LDL levels often observed without high cholesterol levels). The results for cholesterol lowering are more impressive and more consistent than the results for treating hyperglycemia and highlight the need to do both when managing patients with diabetes.

**Conclusion**
In adults with diabetes mellitus, simvastatin therapy at 40 mg daily reduced vascular events.

**Sources of funding:** UK Medical Research Council; British Heart Foundation; Merck & Co; Roche Vitamins Ltd.

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*See Glossary.
‡Information provided by author.

Simvastatin vs placebo in diabetes mellitus at mean 4.8-year follow-up¶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Simvastatin</th>
<th>Placebo</th>
<th>RRR (95% CI)</th>
<th>NNT (CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major coronary event†</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26% (14 to 36)</td>
<td>31 (21 to 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>23% (4.8 to 37)</td>
<td>69 (38 to 353)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revascularization</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16% (1.3 to 28)</td>
<td>62 (32 to 770)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major vascular event¶</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19% (11 to 27)</td>
<td>21 (15 to 37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Abbreviations defined in Glossary. RRR, NNT, and CI calculated from data in article.
†Myocardial infarction or coronary death.
¶Major coronary events, strokes, and revascularizations.

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