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Rosuvastatin to Prevent Vascular Events in Men and Women with Elevated C-Reactive Protein

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Increased levels of the inflammatory biomarker high-sensitivity C-reactive protein predict cardiovascular events. Since statins lower levels of high-sensitivity C-reactive protein as well as cholesterol, we hypothesized that people with elevated high-sensitivity C-reactive protein levels but without hyperlipidemia might benefit from statin treatment.

METHODS

We randomly assigned 17,802 apparently healthy men and women with low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels of less than 130 mg per deciliter (3.4 mmol per liter) and high-sensitivity C-reactive protein levels of 2.0 mg per liter or higher to rosuvastatin, 20 mg daily, or placebo and followed them for the occurrence of the combined primary end point of myocardial infarction, stroke, arterial revascularization, hospitalization for unstable angina, or death from cardiovascular causes.

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RESULTS

The trial was stopped after a median follow-up of 1.9 years (maximum, 5.0). Rosuvastatin reduced LDL cholesterol levels by 50% and high-sensitivity C-reactive protein levels by 37%. The rates of the primary end point were 0.77 and 1.36 per 100 person-years of follow-up in the rosuvastatin and placebo groups, respectively (hazard ratio for rosuvastatin, 0.56; 95% confidence interval [CI], 0.46 to 0.69; P<0.00001), with corresponding rates of 0.17 and 0.37 for myocardial infarction (hazard ratio, 0.46; 95% CI, 0.30 to 0.70; P=0.0002), 0.18 and 0.34 for stroke (hazard ratio, 0.52; 95% CI, 0.34 to 0.79; P=0.002), 0.41 and 0.77 for revascularization or unstable angina (hazard ratio, 0.53; 95% CI, 0.40 to 0.70; P<0.00001), 0.45 and 0.85 for the combined end point of myocardial infarction, stroke, or death from cardiovascular causes (hazard ratio, 0.53; 95% CI, 0.40 to 0.69; P<0.00001), and 1.00 and 1.25 for death from any cause (hazard ratio, 0.80; 95% CI, 0.67 to 0.97; P=0.02). Consistent effects were observed in all subgroups evaluated. The rosuvastatin group did not have a significant increase in myopathy or cancer but did have a higher incidence of physician-reported diabetes.

CONCLUSIONS

In this trial of apparently healthy persons without hyperlipidemia but with elevated high-sensitivity C-reactive protein levels, rosuvastatin significantly reduced the incidence of major cardiovascular events. (ClinicalTrials.gov number, NCT00239681.)

Table 1. Baseline Characteristics of the Trial Participants, According to Study Group.*

Characteristic	Rosuvastatin (N = 8901)	Placebo (N = 8901)
Age — yr		
Median	66.0	66.0
Interquartile range	60.0–71.0	60.0–71.0
Female sex — no. (%)	3426 (38.5)	3375 (37.9)
Race or ethnic group — no. (%)†		
White	6358 (71.4)	6325 (71.1)
Black	1100 (12.4)	1124 (12.6)
Hispanic	1121 (12.6)	1140 (12.8)
Other or unknown	322 (3.6)	312 (3.5)
Body-mass index‡		
Median	28.3	28.4
Interquartile range	25.3–32.0	25.3–32.0
Blood pressure — mm Hg		
Systolic		
Median	134	134
Interquartile range	124–145	124–145
Diastolic		
Median	80	80
Interquartile range	75–87	75–87

Current smoker — no. (%)	1400 (15.7)	1420 (16.0)
Family history of premature CHD — no. (%)§	997 (11.2)	1048 (11.8)
Metabolic syndrome — no. (%)¶	3652 (41.0)	3723 (41.8)
Aspirin use — no. (%)	1481 (16.6)	1477 (16.6)
High-sensitivity C-reactive protein — mg/liter‖		
Median	4.2	4.3
Interquartile range	2.8–7.1	2.8–7.2
LDL cholesterol — mg/dl		
Median	108	108
Interquartile range	94–119	94–119
HDL cholesterol — mg/dl		
Median	49	49
Interquartile range	40–60	40–60
Triglycerides — mg/dl		
Median	118	118
Interquartile range	85–169	86–169
Total cholesterol — mg/dl		
Median	186	185
Interquartile range	168–200	169–199
Glucose — mg/dl		
Median	94	94
Interquartile range	87–102	88–102

Table 2. Lipid and High-Sensitivity C-Reactive Protein Levels during the Follow-up Period, According to Study Group.*

Level	12 Mo		24 Mo		36 Mo		48 Mo	
	Rosuvastatin	Placebo	Rosuvastatin	Placebo	Rosuvastatin	Placebo	Rosuvastatin	Placebo
High-sensitivity C-reactive protein (mg/liter)								
Median	2.2	3.5	2.2	3.5	2.0	3.5	1.8	3.3
Interquartile range	1.2–4.4	2.0–6.2	1.2–4.3	2.0–6.1	1.1–3.9	1.8–6.0	1.1–3.7	1.7–6.1
LDL cholesterol (mg/dl)								
Median	55	110	54	108	53	106	55	109
Interquartile range	44–72	94–125	42–69	93–123	42–69	90–121	44–70	94–124
HDL cholesterol (mg/dl)								
Median	52	50	52	50	50	49	50	50
Interquartile range	43–64	41–61	44–65	42–61	41–62	40–59	41–61	42–60
Triglycerides (mg/dl)								
Median	99	119	99	116	106	123	99	118
Interquartile range	74–137	87–167	73–134	83–165	77–148	90–173	74–140	87–164

* P<0.001 for all between-group comparisons except for high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol at 36 months (P=0.003) and at 48 months (P=0.34). The mean difference in low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels between the two groups at 12 months was 47 mg per deciliter (1.2 mmol per liter). To convert values for cholesterol to millimoles per liter, multiply by 0.02586. To convert values for triglycerides to millimoles per liter, multiply by 0.01129.

Table 3. Outcomes According to Study Group.

End Point	Rosuvastatin (N=8901)		Placebo (N=8901)		Hazard Ratio (95% CI)	P Value
	No. of Patients	Rate per 100 person-yr	No. of Patients	Rate per 100 person-yr		
Primary end point	142	0.77	251	1.36	0.56 (0.46–0.69)	<0.00001
Nonfatal myocardial infarction	22	0.12	62	0.33	0.35 (0.22–0.58)	<0.00001
Any myocardial infarction	31	0.17	68	0.37	0.46 (0.30–0.70)	0.0002
Nonfatal stroke	30	0.16	58	0.31	0.52 (0.33–0.80)	0.003
Any stroke	33	0.18	64	0.34	0.52 (0.34–0.79)	0.002
Arterial revascularization	71	0.38	131	0.71	0.54 (0.41–0.72)	<0.0001
Hospitalization for unstable angina	16	0.09	27	0.14	0.59 (0.32–1.10)	0.09
Arterial revascularization or hospitalization for unstable angina	76	0.41	143	0.77	0.53 (0.40–0.70)	<0.00001
Myocardial infarction, stroke, or confirmed death from cardiovascular causes	83	0.45	157	0.85	0.53 (0.40–0.69)	<0.00001
Death from any cause						
Death on known date	190	0.96	235	1.19	0.81 (0.67–0.98)	0.03
Any death	198	1.00	247	1.25	0.80 (0.67-0.97)	0.02

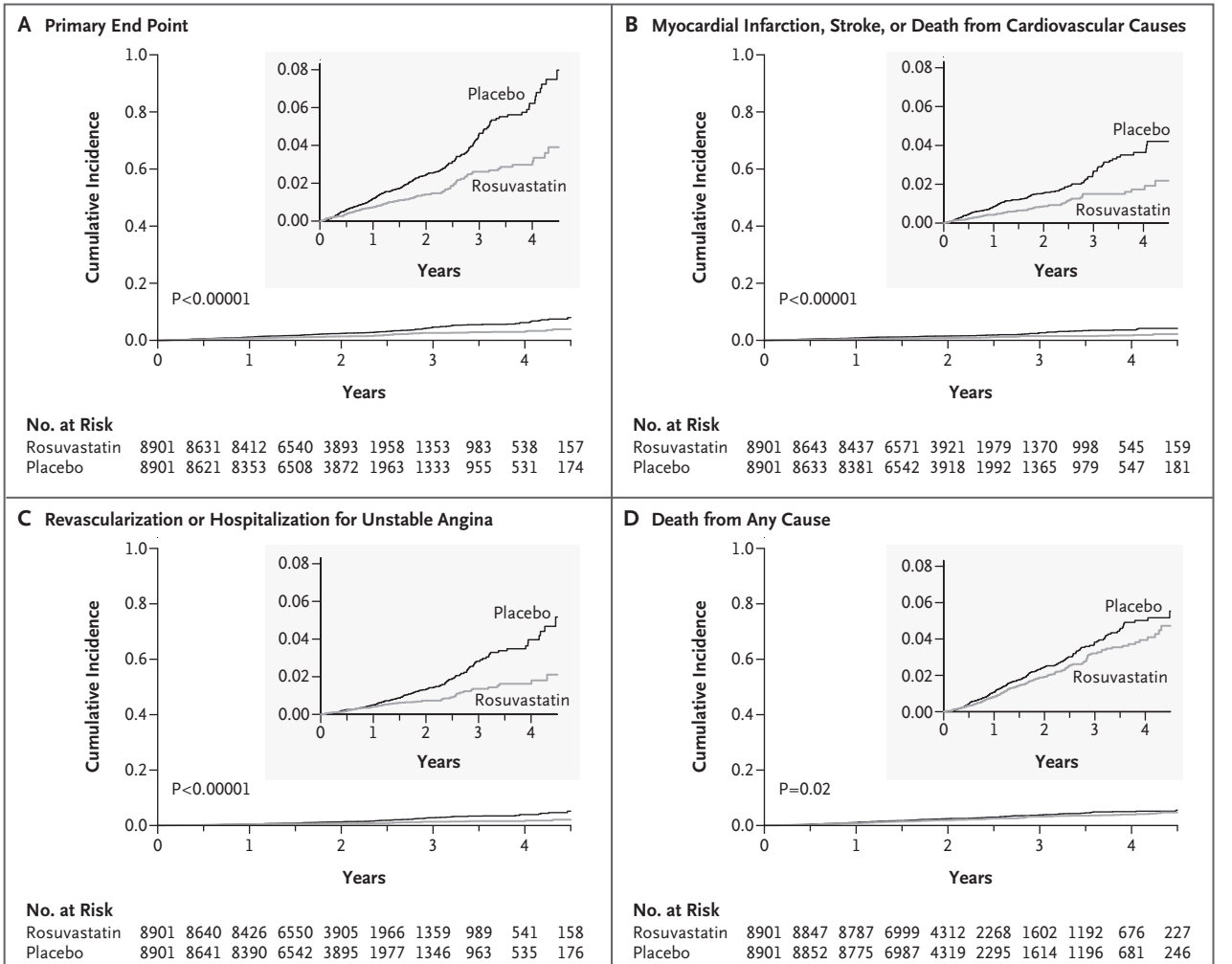

Figure 1. Cumulative Incidence of Cardiovascular Events According to Study Group.

Panel A shows the cumulative incidence of the primary end point (nonfatal myocardial infarction, nonfatal stroke, arterial revascularization, hospitalization for unstable angina, or confirmed death from cardiovascular causes). The hazard ratio for rosuvastatin, as compared with placebo, was 0.56 (95% confidence interval [CI], 0.46 to 0.69; P<0.00001). Panel B shows the cumulative incidence of nonfatal myocardial infarction, nonfatal stroke, or death from cardiovascular causes, for which the hazard ratio in the rosuvastatin group was 0.53 (95% CI, 0.40 to 0.69; P<0.00001). Panel C shows the cumulative incidence of arterial revascularization or hospitalization for unstable angina, for which the hazard ratio in the rosuvastatin group was 0.53 (95% CI, 0.40 to 0.70; P<0.00001). Panel D shows the cumulative incidence of death from any cause, for which the hazard ratio in the rosuvastatin group was 0.80 (95% CI, 0.67 to 0.97; P=0.02). In each panel, the inset shows the same data on an enlarged y axis and on a condensed x axis.