Special report: The efficacy and safety of statins in the elderly

BlueCross BlueShield Association

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Citation

Authors’ objectives
This Special Report reviews the evidence from clinical trials that evaluates the use of statins in the elderly age group. The beneficial effect of statins on cardiovascular outcomes, and the potential benefit on other non-cardiovascular outcomes, will be weighed against the adverse event profile for these medications in the elderly, in order to determine the overall benefit/risk ratio for this class of medications.

Authors’ conclusions
The benefits of statins in reducing cardiovascular events extend to the elderly population. The relative benefit of statin treatment in this population is likely to be similar to that for younger patients, while the absolute benefit is likely to be greater due to the increased rate of cardiovascular events in this population.

There are several limitations to these conclusions. The available evidence primarily refers to secondary prevention of coronary events. There is very little evidence for primary prevention in elderly patients. Also the available evidence does not represent the entire spectrum of age in "elderly" patients. These trials do not include the "old" old, enrolling few patients older than 75 years and virtually no patients older than 80 years. As a result, the comparisons made between the elderly and non-elderly populations are made within relatively narrow ranges of age.

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Address for correspondence
BlueCross BlueShield Association, Technology Evaluation Center, 225 North Michigan Ave, Chicago, Illinois, USA.
Tel: 888 832 4321 Email: tec@bcbsa.com