

Comparing the Pros and Cons of Statins and Non-Statins Lipid-Lowering Agents for the Treatment of Carotid Artery Disease

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Abstract

Carotid artery disease is a condition characterized by the buildup of plaque in the carotid arteries, which are the blood vessels that supply oxygenated blood to the brain. This buildup can lead to the formation of blood clots, which can block the flow of blood to the brain and cause a stroke. Statins and non-statin lipid-lowering agents are commonly used to treat carotid artery disease by reducing cholesterol levels and preventing the buildup of plaque in the arteries. In this article, we will explore the pros and cons of these medications in the treatment of carotid artery disease.

Keywords: Blood clots • Kidney • Medications

Introduction

Statins are a class of medications that work by inhibiting the enzyme responsible for cholesterol synthesis in the liver. This results in a decrease in the amount of cholesterol in the blood and a reduction in the buildup of plaque in the arteries. One of the main advantages of statins is that they have been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular events, including stroke, in patients with carotid artery disease. Studies have shown that statin therapy can decrease the risk of stroke by up to 30% in patients with carotid artery disease.

Literature Review

In addition to their ability to reduce the risk of stroke, statins also have a number of other potential benefits in the treatment of carotid artery disease. For example, they can improve endothelial function, reduce inflammation in the arteries, and stabilize existing plaque, all of which can contribute to a reduction in the risk of cardiovascular events. However, there are also some potential drawbacks to the use of statins in the treatment of carotid artery disease. One of the most common side effects of statin therapy is muscle pain and weakness, which can be severe enough to interfere with daily activities. Some patients may also experience liver damage, although this is relatively rare. Additionally, there is some concern that long-term use of statins may increase the risk of developing diabetes.

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents are another option for the treatment of carotid artery disease. These medications include drugs such as ezetimibe and bile acid sequestrants, which work by reducing the absorption of cholesterol in the intestines. One advantage of non-statin lipid-lowering agents is that they are generally well-tolerated and have a low risk of serious side effects [1].

However, non-statin lipid-lowering agents may not be as effective as statins in reducing the risk of cardiovascular events in patients with carotid artery disease. For example, the IMPROVE-IT study found that the addition

of ezetimibe to statin therapy reduced the risk of cardiovascular events by an additional 2%, but did not significantly reduce the risk of stroke. There are also some potential drawbacks to the use of non-statin lipid-lowering agents. For example, bile acid sequestrants can cause gastrointestinal side effects such as constipation and bloating. Additionally, some of these medications can interact with other drugs and may not be suitable for use in patients with certain medical conditions.

Both statins and non-statin lipid-lowering agents are useful options for the treatment of carotid artery disease. Statins have been shown to be highly effective in reducing the risk of stroke and other cardiovascular events, although they may be associated with some side effects. Non-statin lipid-lowering agents are generally well-tolerated, but may not be as effective as statins in reducing the risk of cardiovascular events. Ultimately, the choice of medication will depend on the individual patient's medical history, risk factors, and preferences, and should be made in consultation with a healthcare provider [2].

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents are a group of medications used to lower cholesterol levels in the blood. They are often used as an alternative to statins, which are the most commonly prescribed lipid-lowering drugs [3]. Non-statin lipid-lowering agents work by different mechanisms than statins, and they may be used alone or in combination with other drugs, including statins. In this article, we will discuss the different types of non-statin lipid-lowering agents, their mechanisms of action, their effectiveness in lowering cholesterol levels, and their potential side effects.

Types of non-statin lipid-lowering agents

There are several different types of non-statin lipid-lowering agents, including bile acid sequestrants, nicotinic acid, fibrates, and cholesterol absorption inhibitors.

Bile acid sequestrants are drugs that bind to bile acids in the intestine, preventing their reabsorption and promoting their excretion. This leads to a reduction in the amount of bile acids available for digestion and absorption, which in turn reduces the amount of cholesterol that is absorbed by the body [4,5].

Nicotinic acid, also known as niacin, is a vitamin that has been shown to reduce levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, the "bad" cholesterol that can build up in the arteries and lead to heart disease. Nicotinic acid also increases levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, the "good" cholesterol that helps remove excess cholesterol from the body.

Fibrates are a class of drugs that work by activating a receptor in the liver

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called peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor alpha (PPAR-alpha). This leads to an increase in the breakdown and removal of triglycerides, a type of fat that can contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries.

Cholesterol absorption inhibitors are drugs that block the absorption of cholesterol in the intestine, reducing the amount of cholesterol that enters the bloodstream.

Mechanisms of action

Bile acid sequestrants work by binding to bile acids in the intestine, preventing their reabsorption and promoting their excretion. This leads to a reduction in the amount of bile acids available for digestion and absorption, which in turn reduces the amount of cholesterol that is absorbed by the body.

Nicotinic acid works by inhibiting the production of very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL), a type of lipoprotein that transports triglycerides in the blood. By reducing the production of VLDL, nicotinic acid reduces the amount of triglycerides that are carried in the blood and helps to increase levels of HDL cholesterol [6].

Fibrates work by activating PPAR-alpha, which regulates the expression of genes involved in lipid metabolism. This leads to an increase in the breakdown and removal of triglycerides from the blood and an increase in the production of HDL cholesterol. Cholesterol absorption inhibitors work by blocking the absorption of cholesterol in the intestine, reducing the amount of cholesterol that enters the bloodstream.

Effectiveness in lowering cholesterol levels

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents have been shown to be effective in lowering cholesterol levels, although the degree of reduction varies depending on the type of drug used. Bile acid sequestrants have been shown to lower LDL cholesterol levels by up to 20%, while nicotinic acid can lower LDL cholesterol levels by up to 25% and increase HDL cholesterol levels by up to 35%. Fibrates can lower triglyceride levels by up to 50% and increase HDL cholesterol levels by up to 20%, while cholesterol absorption inhibitors can lower LDL cholesterol levels by up to 20%.

Potential side effects

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents can cause a range of side effects, although the type and severity of side effects vary depending on the specific drug used. Bile acid sequestrants can cause gastrointestinal side effects, such as constipation, bloating, and abdominal pain. Nicotinic acid can cause flushing, itching, and gastrointestinal side effects, and in high doses, it can cause liver damage. Fibrates can cause gastrointestinal side effects, such as nausea, diarrhea, and abdominal pain, and in rare cases, they can cause muscle damage and liver damage. Cholesterol absorption inhibitors can cause gastrointestinal side effects, such as diarrhea, and in rare cases, they can cause liver damage.

In addition to these potential side effects, non-statin lipid-lowering agents can interact with other medications, including blood thinners, diabetes medications, and certain antibiotics. It is important to discuss any medications you are taking with your healthcare provider before starting a non-statin lipid-lowering agent. Non-statin lipid-lowering agents may be considered in individuals who cannot tolerate statins or who do not achieve their target cholesterol levels with statin therapy alone. They may also be used in combination with statins to achieve greater reductions in cholesterol levels.

The American Heart Association recommends that non-statin lipid-lowering agents be considered in individuals with very high LDL cholesterol levels or in those who have a high risk of cardiovascular disease but cannot tolerate statins. They may also be considered in individuals with high triglyceride levels or low HDL cholesterol levels. It is important to note that lifestyle modifications, such as a healthy diet and regular exercise, should be the first line of therapy for the management of cholesterol levels. Non-statin lipid-lowering agents should be used in conjunction with these lifestyle modifications and should not be considered a substitute for them [7].

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents are a group of medications used to lower

cholesterol levels in the blood. They work by different mechanisms than statins and may be used alone or in combination with other drugs, including statins. Bile acid sequestrants, nicotinic acid, fibrates, and cholesterol absorption inhibitors are all types of non-statin lipid-lowering agents that have been shown to be effective in reducing cholesterol levels [3]. However, they can also cause side effects, and it is important to discuss any potential risks with your healthcare provider before starting a non-statin lipid-lowering agent. Lifestyle modifications should be the first line of therapy for the management of cholesterol levels, and non-statin lipid-lowering agents should be used in conjunction with these modifications.

Comparing between Pros and Cons of statins and non-statin lipid-lowering agents

Carotid artery disease is a condition that occurs when the carotid arteries, which supply blood to the brain, become narrowed or blocked. This condition can lead to stroke, which is a serious and potentially life-threatening medical event. Statins and non-statin lipid-lowering agents are two classes of drugs that are commonly used to treat carotid artery disease.

Here are some of the pros and cons of each-

Pros: Statins are effective at lowering LDL cholesterol levels, which can help reduce the risk of stroke in patients with carotid artery disease.

Statins are widely used and have been studied extensively, so their safety profile is well-established.

Statins have been shown to have additional benefits beyond lipid lowering, such as reducing inflammation and stabilizing plaques in the arteries [6].

Cons: Some patients may experience side effects such as muscle pain, liver damage, or gastrointestinal problems when taking statins.

Statins can interact with other medications, so it is important to inform your doctor of all medications you are taking.

Statins may not be appropriate for patients with certain medical conditions, such as liver disease or muscle disorders.

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents

Pros: Non-statin lipid-lowering agents, such as ezetimibe or PCSK9 inhibitors, can be used in combination with statins to further lower LDL cholesterol levels.

Some non-statin lipid-lowering agents may have fewer side effects than statins.

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents may be a good option for patients who cannot tolerate or do not respond well to statin therapy.

Cons: Non-statin lipid-lowering agents are generally more expensive than statins.

Non-statin lipid-lowering agents have not been studied as extensively as statins, so their long-term safety profile is not as well-established.

Some non-statin lipid-lowering agents may require more frequent dosing or administration via injection, which can be less convenient for patients.

Both statins and non-statin lipid-lowering agents can be effective treatments for carotid artery disease. The choice of therapy depends on the individual patient's medical history, risk factors, and treatment goals. It is important for patients to work closely with their doctors to determine the most appropriate treatment plan.

Conclusion

Both statins and non-statin lipid-lowering agents have their respective pros and cons when it comes to treating carotid artery disease. Statins are widely used and have a well-established safety profile, but may cause side effects in some patients. Non-statin lipid-lowering agents, on the other hand, may have fewer side effects and can be used in combination with statins for

further LDL cholesterol reduction, but they are generally more expensive and their long-term safety profile is not as well-established. Ultimately, the choice of therapy should be made based on the individual patient's medical history, risk factors, and treatment goals, and the decision should be made in consultation with the patient's doctor. It is important for patients to be aware of the potential benefits and risks associated with both types of medications in order to make informed decisions about their care.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by authors.

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