

EXPERT CONSENSUS DECISION PATHWAY

# 2017 Focused Update of the 2016 ACC Expert Consensus Decision Pathway on the Role of Non-Statins Therapies for LDL-Cholesterol Lowering in the Management of Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease Risk



A Report of the American College of Cardiology Task Force  
on Expert Consensus Decision Pathways

Endorsed by the National Lipid Association

**Writing  
Committee**

Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, MD, FACC, *Chair*  
Pamela B. Morris, MD, FACC, *Vice Chair*

Christie M. Ballantyne, MD, FACC  
Kim K. Birtcher, PHARM D, AACC  
David D. Daly, Jr, MD  
Sondra M. DePalma, MHS, DHSc(c), PA-C, CLS, AACC

Margo B. Minissian, PhD, ACNP, AACC  
Carl E. Orringer, MD, FACC, FNLA\*  
Sidney C. Smith, Jr, MD, MACC

\*National Lipid Association Representative.

**2017 Task Force  
on Expert  
Consensus  
Decision  
Pathways**

James L. Januzzi, Jr, MD, FACC, *Chair*  
Luis C. Afonso, MBBS, FACC  
Brendan M. Everett, MD, FACC  
Adrian Hernandez, MD, FACC  
William Hucker, MD, PhD  
Hani Jneid, MD, FACC

Dharam J. Kumbhani, MD, SM, FACC  
Joseph E. Marine, MD, FACC  
Pamela B. Morris, MD, FACC  
Robert Piana, MD, FACC  
Karol E. Watson, MD, FACC  
Barbara S. Wiggins, PHARM D, AACC

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<b>2016 Task Force on Clinical Expert Consensus Documents</b>	James L. Januzzi, Jr, MD, FACC, <i>Chair</i>  Luis C. Afonso, MBBS, FACC Anthony Bavry, MD, FACC Brendan M. Everett, MD, FACC Jonathan Halperin, MD, FACC Adrian Hernandez, MD, FACC Hani Jneid, MD, FACC Dharam J. Kumbhani, MD, SM, FACC	Eva M. Lonn, MD, FACC James K. Min, MD, FACC Pamela B. Morris, MD, FACC John Puskas, MD, FACC Karol E. Watson, MD, FACC Oussama Wazni, MD, FACC Howard Weitz, MD, FACC Barbara S. Wiggins, PharmD, AACC
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## ABSTRACT FOR THE 2017 FOCUSED UPDATE TO THE 2016 EXPERT CONSENSUS DECISION PATHWAY

In 2016, the American College of Cardiology published the first expert consensus decision pathway (ECDP) on the role of non-statin therapies for low-density lipoprotein (LDL)-cholesterol lowering in the management of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) risk. Since the publication of that document, additional evidence and perspectives have emerged from randomized clinical trials and other sources, particularly considering the longer-term efficacy and safety of proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9 (PCSK9) inhibitors in secondary prevention of ASCVD. Most notably, the FOURIER (Further Cardiovascular Outcomes Research with PCSK9 Inhibition in Subjects with Elevated Risk) trial and SPIRE-1 and -2 (Studies of PCSK9 Inhibition and the Reduction of Vascular Events), assessing evolocumab and bococizumab, respectively, have published final results of cardiovascular outcomes trials in patients with clinical ASCVD and in a smaller number of high-risk primary prevention patients. In addition, further evidence on the types of patients most likely to benefit from the use of ezetimibe in addition to statin therapy after acute coronary syndrome has been published. Based on results from these important analyses, the ECDP writing committee judged that it would be desirable to provide a focused update to help guide clinicians more clearly on decision making regarding the use of ezetimibe and PCSK9 inhibitors in patients with clinical ASCVD with or without comorbidities. In the following summary table, changes from the 2016 ECDP to the 2017 ECDP Focused Update are highlighted, and a brief rationale is provided. The content of the full document has been changed accordingly, with more extensive and detailed guidance regarding decision making provided both in the text and in the updated algorithms. Revised recommendations are provided for patients with clinical ASCVD with or without comorbidities on statin therapy for secondary prevention. The ECDP writing committee judged that these new data did not warrant changes to the decision pathways and algorithms regarding the use of ezetimibe or PCSK9 inhibitors in primary prevention patients with LDL-C <190 mg/dL with or without diabetes mellitus or patients without ASCVD and LDL-C ≥190 mg/dL not due to secondary causes. Based on feedback and further deliberation, the ECDP writing committee down-graded recommendations regarding bile acid sequestrant use, recommending bile acid sequestrants only as optional secondary agents for consideration in patients intolerant to ezetimibe. For clarification, the writing committee has also included new information on diagnostic categories of heterozygous and homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia, based on clinical criteria with and without genetic testing. Other changes to the original document were kept to a minimum to provide consistent guidance to clinicians, unless there was a compelling reason or new evidence, in which case justification is provided.

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## PREFACE

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) develops a number of clinical policy documents to provide members

with guidance on clinical topics. Although clinical practice guidelines remain the primary mechanism for offering evidence-based recommendations, such guidelines may contain gaps in their guidance regarding clinical decision making, particularly when equipoise is present in a topic. Expert consensus documents are intended to provide guidance for clinicians in areas where evidence may be limited, are new and evolving, or lack sufficient data to fully inform clinical decision making.

In an effort to increase the impact of ACC clinical policy on patient care, an ACC Presidential Task Force was formed in 2014 to examine the processes and format of ACC's clinical documents. The main recommendation of the task force was a new focus on concise decision pathways and/or key points of care, instead of the traditional longer documents. The task force also established criteria for identifying high-value clinical topics to be addressed, as well as an innovative approach to collecting stakeholder input through roundtable or think tank meetings. To complement the new focus on brief decision pathways and key points, expert consensus documents were rebranded Expert Consensus Decision Pathways (ECDPs).

Although decision pathways have a new format, they maintain the same goal of expert consensus documents: to develop clinical policy based on expert opinion in areas in which important clinical decisions are not adequately addressed by the available existing trials. ECDPs are designed to complement the guidelines and bridge the gaps in clinical guidance that remain. In some cases, topics covered by ECDPs will be addressed subsequently by ACC/AHA guidelines as the evidence base evolves. The writing groups are charged with developing algorithms that are more actionable and can be implemented in the form of tools or apps to accelerate the use of these documents at point of care. Expert consensus decision pathways are intended, not to provide a single correct answer, but to encourage clinicians to ask certain questions and consider important factors as they reach a decision on a treatment plan together with patients. There may be multiple pathways that can be taken for treatment decisions and the goal is to help clinicians and patients make a more informed decision together.

This document is the first focused update of a decision pathway and, as such, represents a new step in the evolution of our pathways documents. Congruent with our goal of producing actionable guidance that accounts for the latest clinical evidence, we have incorporated the results of recent clinical trials into the document. Changes to the 2016 pathway made as part of this focused update are summarized in [Table 1](#).

*James L. Januzzi, MD, FACC  
Chair, ACC Task Force on Expert Consensus Decision Pathways*

**TABLE 1** Summary of Changes in the 2017 Focused Update

Section	2016 ECDP	2017 ECDP Focused Update
<b>1. Introduction</b>	Included consideration of evidence from cardiovascular outcomes trials of ezetimibe, niacin, and niacin/laropiprant.	Includes consideration of new randomized clinical trial (RCT) data with the PCSK9 inhibitors, evolocumab and bococizumab.
<b>Comment/Rationale:</b> At the time of publication of the original 2016 ACC ECDP on the Role of Non-Statins Therapies for LDL-Cholesterol Lowering in the Management of Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease Risk (1), long-term cardiovascular outcomes trials were ongoing for both alirocumab and evolocumab, as well as for bococizumab, a PCSK9 inhibitor that is not U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved. Subsequently, the final results of the FOURIER (Further Cardiovascular Outcomes Research with PCSK9 Inhibition in Subjects with Elevated Risk) and SPIRE-1 and -2 (Studies of PCSK9 Inhibition and the Reduction of Vascular Events) cardiovascular outcomes trials were published in early 2017 (2,3). Details of results are included in the updated Introduction section.		
<b>Figures 2A, 2B, and 4</b>	<b>2016 ECDP</b>	<b>2017 ECDP Focused Update</b>
<b>ECDP Algorithms</b>	Thresholds for consideration of net ASCVD risk reduction benefit were percent reduction in LDL-C and may consider absolute LDL-C level in patients with clinical ASCVD, baseline LDL-C $\geq 190$ mg/dL, and primary prevention. In patients with diabetes with or without clinical ASCVD, it was stated that the clinician may consider absolute LDL-C and/or non-HDL-C levels.	Thresholds for consideration of net ASCVD risk reduction are percent reduction in LDL-C and may consider absolute LDL-C or non-HDL-C levels for patients in each of the 4 statin benefit groups.
<b>Comment/Rationale:</b> The FOURIER trial of evolocumab included patients with clinical ASCVD with or without diabetes on statin dose equivalent of at least atorvastatin 20 mg who had either LDL-C $\geq 70$ mg/dL or non-HDL-C $\geq 100$ mg/dL (2). The ongoing ODYSSEY Outcomes trial of alirocumab includes patients with non-HDL-C $\geq 100$ mg/dL (4). The SPIRE-2 trial of bococizumab included high-risk primary prevention patients (18.9%) and patients with familial hypercholesterolemia (7.0%) with LDL-C $\geq 100$ mg/dL or non-HDL-C $\geq 130$ mg/dL (5). In alignment with these inclusion criteria, the 2017 Focused Update includes both LDL-C and non-HDL-C thresholds for evaluation of net ASCVD risk reduction benefit when considering the addition of non-statin therapies for patients in each of the 4 statin benefit groups.		
<b>Figures 2A and 2B</b>	<b>2016 ECDP</b>	<b>2017 ECDP Focused Update</b>
<b>Adults <math>\geq 21</math> Years of Age With Clinical ASCVD, on Statin for Secondary Prevention, Baseline LDL-C 70-189 mg/dL</b>	Thresholds for consideration of net ASCVD risk reduction benefit in patients with clinical ASCVD <i>without</i> comorbidities were $\geq 50\%$ reduction in LDL-C and may consider LDL-C $< 100$ mg/dL. Thresholds for patients with clinical ASCVD <i>with</i> comorbidities were $\geq 50\%$ reduction in LDL-C and may consider LDL-C $< 70$ mg/dL.	Thresholds for consideration of net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit are LDL-C reduction $\geq 50\%$ and may consider LDL-C $< 70$ mg/dL or non-HDL-C $< 100$ mg/dL for <u>all</u> patients with clinical ASCVD and baseline LDL-C 70-189 mg/dL.
<b>Comment/Rationale:</b> The writing committee considered the results of the cardiovascular outcomes trials, IMPROVE-IT (Improved Reduction of Outcomes: Vytorin Efficacy International Trial) and FOURIER, demonstrating the safety and efficacy of the addition of ezetimibe or evolocumab to maximally tolerated statin therapy in patients with clinical ASCVD and on-statin-treatment LDL-C levels of approximately 70 mg/dL in IMPROVE-IT and 92 mg/dL in FOURIER (2,6). Based on consideration of all available evidence, the consensus of the writing committee members is that lower LDL-C levels are safe and optimal in patients with clinical ASCVD due to the increased risk of recurrent events.		
<b>Figure 2B</b>	<b>2016 ECDP Recommendation</b>	<b>2017 ECDP Focused Update</b>
<b>Adults <math>\geq 21</math> Years of Age With Clinical ASCVD With comorbidities, on Statin for Secondary Prevention, Baseline LDL-C 70-189 mg/d-L</b>	If a decision is made to proceed with the addition of non-statin therapy to maximally tolerated statin therapy, it is reasonable to consider the addition of ezetimibe as the initial agent and a PCSK9 inhibitor as the second agent.	If a decision is made to proceed with the addition of non-statin therapy to maximally tolerated statin therapy in patients with clinical ASCVD with comorbidities and baseline LDL-C 70-189 mg/dL, it is reasonable to consider the addition of <u>either</u> ezetimibe <u>or</u> a PCSK9 inhibitor based on considerations of the additional percent LDL-C reduction desired, patient preferences, costs, route of administration, and other factors. Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences. Considerations that may favor the initial choice of ezetimibe include: patients who require $< 25\%$ additional lowering of LDL-C, patients with recent ACS $< 3$ months, cost considerations with recent availability of generic ezetimibe and future cost savings, ease of use as oral agent with low pill burden, patient preferences, heart failure, hypertension, age $> 75$ years, diabetes, stroke, CABG, PAD, eGFR $< 60$ mL/min/1.73 m <sup>2</sup> , and smoking. If patients with clinical ASCVD and comorbidities require $> 25\%$ additional lowering of LDL-C, a PCSK9 inhibitor may be preferred as the initial non-statin agent. The clinician-patient discussion should consider the extent of available scientific evidence for net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit, cost, administration by subcutaneous injection, every 14-day or monthly dosing schedule, and storage requirements (refrigeration).
<b>Comment/Rationale:</b> The results of FOURIER demonstrated that in high-risk patients with clinical ASCVD and additional risk factors, evolocumab treatment significantly reduced the risk of the primary endpoint (composite of cardiovascular death, MI, stroke, hospitalization for unstable angina, or coronary revascularization) (hazard ratio: 0.85; 95% confidence interval [CI]: 0.79 to 0.92, $p < 0.001$ ) and the key secondary endpoint (composite of cardiovascular death, MI, or stroke) (hazard ratio: 0.80; 95% CI: 0.73 to 0.88; $p < 0.001$ ) (7). The magnitude of risk reduction in cardiovascular death, MI, or stroke appeared to increase over time, from 16% in the first year of follow-up to 25% beyond 1 year. See text for further details. The ongoing ODYSSEY Outcomes trial includes 18,600 post-ACS (4-52 weeks) patients on evidence-based statin therapy who are randomized to the addition of alirocumab or placebo. The primary endpoint is CHD death, MI, ischemic stroke, or hospitalization for unstable angina. The estimated study completion date is December 2017 (4). A recent post-hoc analysis of IMPROVE-IT identified 9 clinical variables (congestive heart failure, hypertension, age $> 75$ years, diabetes, stroke, CABG, PAD, eGFR $< 60$ mL/min/1.73 m <sup>2</sup> , and smoking) that may help predict patients after ACS who have the greatest likelihood of benefit from the addition of ezetimibe to statin therapy following ACS (8).		

Continued on the next page

TABLE 1 Continued

Figure 2B	2016 ECDP Recommendation	2017 ECDP Focused Update
Adults ≥21 Years of Age With Clinical ASCVD With Comorbidities, on Statin for Secondary Prevention, Baseline LDL-C 70-189 mg/dL	In patients with clinical ASCVD, comorbidities associated with increased risk of recurrent events included: diabetes, a recent (<3 months) ASCVD event, an ASCVD event while already taking a statin, poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factors, elevated lipoprotein(a), CKD, symptomatic heart failure, maintenance hemodialysis, or baseline LDL-C ≥190 mg/dL not due to secondary causes.	The 2017 Focused Update also includes the following factors that may be considered for the identification of higher-risk patients with clinical ASCVD: age ≥65 years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD with prior MI or stroke, history of non-MI related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with ≥40% stenosis in ≥2 large vessels, HDL-C <40 mg/dL for men and <50 mg/dL for women, hs-CRP >2 mg/L, or metabolic syndrome (7).
Comment/Rationale: The results of FOURIER demonstrated that in high-risk patients with clinical ASCVD and additional risk factors, evolocumab treatment significantly reduced the risk of the primary endpoint (composite of cardiovascular death, MI, stroke, hospitalization for unstable angina, or coronary revascularization) (hazard ratio: 0.85; 95% CI: 0.79 to 0.92, p<0.001) and the key secondary endpoint (composite of cardiovascular death, MI, or stroke) (hazard ratio: 0.80; 95% CI: 0.73 to 0.88; p<0.001) (7). The inclusion criteria in FOURIER were clinical ASCVD and at least 1 major risk factor (patients with age ≥65 years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD with prior MI or stroke) or 2 minor risk factors (history of non-MI related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with ≥40% stenosis in ≥2 large vessels, HDL-C <40 mg/dL for men and <50 mg/dL for women, hs-CRP >2 mg/L, or metabolic syndrome).		

ACC indicates American College of Cardiology; ACS, acute coronary syndrome; ASCVD, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease; CABG, coronary artery bypass graft; CI, confidence interval; CKD, chronic kidney disease; ECDP, expert consensus decision pathway; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; HDL-C, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol; hs-CRP, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein; LDL, low-density lipoprotein; LDL-C, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol; MI, myocardial infarction; PAD, peripheral arterial disease; PCSK9, proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9; and RCT, randomized clinical trial.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association (ACC/AHA) published the new Guideline on the Treatment of Blood Cholesterol to Reduce Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Risk in Adults (9) along with a companion Guideline on the Assessment of Cardiovascular Risk in asymptomatic individuals (10). Using a rigorous process of independent evidence review and synthesis based largely on results from randomized clinical trials (RCTs), the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline panel found that the vast majority of evidence indicating efficacy and safety of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) lowering for risk reduction came from trials of statin drugs. On the basis of this large and consistent body of evidence, 4 major statin benefit groups were identified for whom the atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) risk reduction clearly outweighs the risk of adverse events (Table 2) (9). These 4 groups comprised adult patients ≥21 years of age with clinical ASCVD; adults ≥21 years of age with LDL-C ≥190 mg/dL (not due to secondary modifiable causes); adults aged 40 to 75 years without ASCVD, but with diabetes and with LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL; and adults ages 40 to 75 years without ASCVD or diabetes, with LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL, and an estimated 10-year risk for ASCVD of ≥7.5% as determined by the Pooled Cohort Equations (10). Subsequent independent guideline groups, including the 2014 Joint British Societies Consensus Recommendations for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease (JBS3) (11), the 2014 Veterans' Administration/Department of Defense Guidelines on Management of Dyslipidemia (12), and the recent U.S.

Preventive Services Task Force draft recommendations (13), have used similar, rigorous approaches to reviewing and synthesizing evidence, resulting in similar treatment recommendations.

Central to the 2013 ACC/AHA guideline panel approach was the concept of “net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit”; in other words, is the likelihood of preventing a major ASCVD event or death greater than the likelihood of a serious adverse event with a given drug therapy? Statins clearly have demonstrated net benefit for the 4 statin benefit groups, whereas other drug therapies available in 2013 had either marginal net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit or had been shown not to provide additional benefit beyond statins. The evidence base from large RCTs of statins consisted of comparisons of fixed-dose statin therapy versus placebo, or higher-intensity versus lower-intensity statin therapy (Table 3) (9). Patients treated with statin versus placebo, or with higher- versus lower-intensity statin therapy, experienced significantly greater ASCVD risk reduction with minimal serious adverse event rates, typically similar to the adverse event rates in placebo comparator groups (14). Of note, the 2013 ACC/AHA guideline panel emphasized the role of shared decision making between clinicians and patients, with consideration of net benefit as well as patient preferences, especially in the setting of primary prevention, in which the marginal benefits may be small for patients at lower risk for ASCVD events in the near term (9).

The amount of ASCVD risk reduction observed with statins was directly related to the amount of LDL-C lowering achieved as a percentage of baseline. For example, in trials showing efficacy of high-intensity statin



therapy, patients on average had  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C from baseline. In trials showing efficacy of moderate-intensity statin therapy, patients typically had on average 30% to  $<50\%$  reduction in LDL-C from baseline. These levels of therapeutic response were therefore taken to indicate adequate response and adherence to therapy.

Because no large RCTs have evaluated the outcome of drug titration to specific LDL-C targets, the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline panel did not make specific recommendations regarding lipoprotein goals of therapy. Instead, the panel recommended initiating either high- or moderate-intensity statin therapy on the basis of patient ASCVD risk characteristics and the potential for net benefit; however, the panel did note that groups of patients with the greatest benefit from statin therapy tended to fall into ranges of LDL-C indicating efficacy of statin therapy. For example, the guideline panel indicated that “in those already on a statin, in whom baseline LDL-C is unknown, an LDL-C level  $<100$  mg/dL was observed in most individuals receiving high-intensity statin therapy” (9). This statement was based on the findings from trials such as Treating to New Targets, in which patients with clinical coronary heart disease were randomized to fixed-dose atorvastatin 80 mg versus 10 mg daily as an active comparator (15). The patients receiving 80 mg of atorvastatin achieved a mean LDL-C of 77 mg/dL, with the majority achieving  $<100$  mg/dL, whereas the patients receiving 10 mg of atorvastatin achieved a mean LDL-C of 101 mg/dL. This difference was associated with a significant 22% reduction in major cardiovascular events in the trial.

In summary, the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline panel recommended using either high- or moderate-intensity statin therapy for patients in the 4 statin benefit groups at risk for ASCVD in primary and secondary prevention scenarios, with dose adjustments as necessitated by factors such as adverse effects, advanced age, drug-drug interactions, and comorbidities. The panel determined that a high level of RCT evidence supports the use of an initial fasting lipid panel (total cholesterol [TC], triglycerides, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol [HDL-C], and calculated LDL-C) followed by a second fasting lipid panel 4 to 12 weeks after initiation of statin therapy, to determine a patient’s adherence and confirm anticipated response to therapy. Thereafter, assessments should be performed every 3 to 12 months as clinically indicated to assess adherence and response to therapy (9).

At the time of guideline publication, the panel could find no data supporting the routine use of U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved non-statin drugs combined with statin therapy for LDL-C reduction with the goal of further reducing ASCVD events. In addition, no published RCTs that assessed ASCVD outcomes in

statin-intolerant patients were found. Therefore, the panel recommended that:

*Clinicians treating high-risk patients who have a less-than-anticipated response to statins, who are unable to tolerate a less-than-recommended intensity of a statin, or who are completely statin intolerant, may consider the addition of a non-statin cholesterol-lowering therapy. High-risk individuals include those with ASCVD, those with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL, and those with diabetes 40 to 75 years of age. In this situation, this guideline recommends clinicians preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences (9).*

The guidance for use of non-statin therapy was intentionally made broad to allow for the discretion of clinicians treating patients with individual circumstances that cannot be anticipated by guidelines or have not been evaluated in clinical trials. In addition, the 2013 ACC/AHA guideline panel recognized that there were several ongoing trials examining the addition of non-statin therapy to statins, such as the HPS2-THRIVE (Heart Protection Study 2-Treatment of HDL to Reduce the Incidence of Vascular Events) and IMPROVE-IT (Improved Reduction of Outcomes: Vytorin Efficacy International Trial) trials (6,16), as well as other novel non-statin agents in development (e.g., proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9 [PCSK9] inhibitors). The recommendations for use of non-statin therapy were constructed to allow for consideration of individual patient circumstances and future trial data in the clinical setting. In fact, the results of HPS2-THRIVE (published in 2014) (16) subsequently showed no benefit and significant harms associated with a long-acting niacin/laropiprant preparation in addition to moderate-intensity statin (simvastatin) compared with moderate-intensity statin alone in patients with clinical ASCVD, despite further lowering of LDL-C with niacin. The IMPROVE-IT trial (published in 2015) (6) demonstrated further reductions in LDL-C with the addition of ezetimibe to a moderate-intensity statin (simvastatin) compared with moderate-intensity statin monotherapy in patients with recent acute coronary syndromes (ACS). Combination therapy demonstrated a statistically significant, but clinically modest, reduction in events over 7 years of follow-up, and no safety concerns were observed with the addition of ezetimibe (6).

More recently, the FDA approved 2 fully human monoclonal antibodies to PCSK9, alirocumab and evolocumab, which inhibit binding of PCSK9 to the LDL receptor, thus increasing LDL receptor density. Both agents were approved as an adjunct to diet and maximally tolerated statin therapy for treatment of adults with

heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia (HeFH) or clinical ASCVD who require additional lowering of LDL-C. In addition, evolocumab was approved for use in combination with other LDL-lowering therapies (e.g., statins, ezetimibe, LDL apheresis) in patients with homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia (HoFH) who require additional lowering of LDL-C (17,18). These agents dramatically reduce LDL-C levels over and above statin therapy, with favorable short-term outcomes data over 1 to 2 years (1,18).

### Rationale for Expert Consensus Decision Pathway

The ACC recognized that clinicians and patients may seek firmer and more specific guidance on the adequacy of statin therapy and whether or when to use non-statin therapies if response to statins is deemed inadequate. Therefore, the ACC convened this expert consensus decision pathway writing committee to address current gaps in care for LDL-C lowering to reduce ASCVD risk. This effort relies extensively on the evidence base established by the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline and attempts to provide further recommendations for clinicians and patients regarding use of non-statin therapies. It should be noted that this process did not involve formal systematic reviews, grading of evidence, or synthesis of evidence. The goal was to provide practical guidance for clinicians and patients in situations not covered by the 2013 ACC/AHA guideline until such time as the next round of guidelines has the opportunity to formally review recent scientific evidence and cardiovascular outcomes trials are completed with new agents for ASCVD risk reduction. Specifically, this panel was convened by the ACC to answer the following questions regarding use of non-statin therapies:

1. In what patient populations should non-statin therapies be considered?
2. In what situations should non-statin therapies be considered, that is, when is the amount of LDL-C lowering (percent LDL-C reduction or LDL-C range achieved on therapy) less than anticipated, less than desired, or inadequate, and which treatment options should be considered in patients who are truly statin intolerant?
3. If non-statin therapies are to be added, which agents or therapies should be considered and in what order?

At the time of publication of the original 2016 ACC ECDP on the Role of Non-Statin Therapies for LDL-Cholesterol Lowering in the Management of Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease Risk (1), long-term cardiovascular outcomes trials were ongoing for both alirocumab and evolocumab, as well as for bococizumab,

a PCSK9 inhibitor that is not FDA approved. Subsequently, the final results of the FOURIER (Further Cardiovascular Outcomes Research with PCSK9 Inhibition in Subjects with Elevated Risk with evolocumab) and SPIRE-1 and -2 (Studies of PCSK9 Inhibition and the Reduction of Vascular Events) cardiovascular outcomes trials (with bococizumab) were published in early 2017 (2,3).

FOURIER was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial that included 27,564 high-risk secondary prevention patients  $\geq 40$  to  $\leq 85$  years of age with clinical ASCVD (defined as myocardial infarction [MI] or non-hemorrhagic stroke within 5 years or symptomatic peripheral arterial disease [PAD]). Participants were also required to have at least 1 major risk factor (age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or nonhemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD with prior MI or stroke) or 2 minor risk factors (history of non-MI-related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C  $< 40$  mg/dL for men and  $< 50$  mg/dL for women, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein [hs-CRP]  $> 2$  mg/L, or metabolic syndrome). Patients had fasting LDL-C levels  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C levels  $\geq 100$  mg/dL after  $\geq 4$  weeks on a stable dose of statin equivalent to at least atorvastatin 20 mg daily, with or without ezetimibe, and fasting triglyceride level  $\leq 400$  mg/dL. Subjects were randomly assigned to receive either evolocumab 140 mg every 2 weeks (or 420 mg monthly) or matching placebo as subcutaneous injections and were followed for a median duration of 2.2 years. At 48 weeks, the mean percent reduction in LDL-C levels with evolocumab as compared with placebo was 59%, from a median baseline value of 92 mg/dL to 30 mg/dL ( $p < 0.001$ ). The interindividual LDL-C-lowering response to the addition of evolocumab therapy has not been reported.

Relative to placebo, evolocumab treatment significantly reduced the risk of the primary endpoint (composite of cardiovascular death, MI, stroke, hospitalization for unstable angina, or coronary revascularization) (hazard ratio: 0.85; 95% confidence interval [CI]: 0.79 to 0.92;  $p < 0.001$ ) and the key secondary endpoint (composite of cardiovascular death, MI, or stroke) (hazard ratio: 0.80; 95% CI: 0.73 to 0.88;  $p < 0.001$ ). The results were consistent across key subgroups, including patients in the lowest quartile of baseline LDL-C levels. The trial was of relatively short duration overall, and therefore, long-term efficacy remains somewhat uncertain. However, the magnitude of risk reduction in cardiovascular death, MI, or stroke appeared to increase over time, from 16% in the first year of follow-up to 25% beyond 1 year. There was a modestly higher rate of injection site reactions among patients receiving evolocumab compared with placebo

(2.1% vs. 1.6%), but there were no other significant differences in adverse events (including new-onset diabetes and neurocognitive events) between study groups. The short-term safety (median follow-up 2.2 years) of very low levels of LDL-C as achieved in patients randomized to evolocumab in addition to the equivalent of at least atorvastatin 20 mg (median LDL-C 30 mg/dL) in the FOURIER trial is reassuring, but additional data is needed to understand the long-term safety of LDL-C levels well below those previously achieved in statin or statin-plus-ezetimibe trials.

Unlike evolocumab and alirocumab, which are fully human monoclonal antibodies, bococizumab is a humanized monoclonal antibody to PCSK9 in which approximately 3% of the murine sequence remains (3). During the conduct of the SPIRE-1 and -2 cardiovascular outcomes trials, data from the SPIRE lipid-lowering trials became available, indicating that the common development of high-titer antidrug antibodies, of which the majority were neutralizing antibodies, resulted in significant attenuation of LDL-C lowering over time (19). In addition, there was wide variation in LDL-C lowering with bococizumab even among patients who did not develop antidrug antibodies. The sponsor of the SPIRE program elected to discontinue further development of bococizumab, thus ending the ongoing outcomes trials with a median duration of follow-up of 7 months in SPIRE-1 and 12 months in SPIRE-2.

Subjects in both SPIRE-1 and -2 had clinical ASCVD (MI, PAD, stroke, or revascularization), or had ASCVD risk conditions (diabetes) and additional risk factors (chronic kidney disease [CKD], conditions of elevated LDL-C, imaging evidence of significant coronary atherosclerosis, smoking, low HDL-C, elevated hs-CRP, microalbuminuria, or lipoprotein (a) [Lp(a)] >50 mg/dL) (3). The entry criteria for LDL-C levels were  $\geq 70$  mg/dL in SPIRE-1 and  $\geq 100$  mg/dL in SPIRE-2. In the combined analysis of both trials, the hazard ratio for the primary endpoint (composite of nonfatal MI, nonfatal stroke, hospitalization for unstable angina requiring urgent revascularization, or cardiovascular death) was not statistically significant (0.88; 95% CI: 0.76 to 1.02;  $p=0.08$ ). In the lower baseline LDL-C, shorter-duration SPIRE-1 trial (mean LDL-C 94 mg/dL at baseline), bococizumab had no benefit on major adverse cardiovascular events (hazard ratio: 0.99; 95% CI: 0.80 to 1.22;  $p=0.94$  at 7 months' mean follow-up). However, in the higher baseline LDL-C, longer-duration SPIRE-2 trial (mean LDL-C 134 mg/dL) bococizumab treatment was associated with significant reduction in the primary endpoint compared with placebo (hazard ratio: 0.79; 95% CI: 0.65 to 0.97;  $p=0.02$  at 12 months' mean follow-up).

Since the publication of the 2016 ECDP, a synthesis of data from clinical trials and observational studies attempted to identify groups of patients for whom the

addition of non-statin therapy to maximally tolerated statin for LDL-C lowering may have the greatest net benefit. LDL-C thresholds were identified among a "very high-risk" group of statin-treated participants with clinical ASCVD and comorbidities, and among a "high-risk" group with ASCVD without comorbidities or with HeFH (20). The authors estimated that adding ezetimibe to reduce LDL-C by a further 20% would provide a 5-year number-needed-to-treat (NNT) of  $\leq 50$  to prevent 1 ASCVD event for very high-risk patients with LDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL, and an NNT  $\leq 30$  for very high-risk patients with LDL-C  $\geq 160$  mg/dL. The NNT was  $\leq 50$  for high-risk primary prevention patients with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL. Adding a PCSK9 inhibitor to a statin to lower LDL-C by at least 50% further would provide an NNT  $\leq 50$  for very high-risk and for high-risk patients with LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL, and an NNT  $\leq 30$  for very high-risk and for high-risk patients with an LDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL. Cost-effectiveness estimates were also provided. These considerations may help clinicians and patients to quantify the potential benefits of adding ezetimibe therapy or PCSK9 inhibitors in secondary prevention and in primary prevention among patients with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL.

*Based on the important evidence of significant benefit in cardiovascular event reduction with the addition of evolocumab to maximally tolerated statin, with or without ezetimibe, and other new perspectives reviewed in the previous text, it was determined by the 2016 ECDP writing committee that a focused update of the original ECDP was needed to revise recommendations for high-risk patients with clinical ASCVD with and without comorbidities who have a less-than-anticipated reduction in LDL-C or in whom additional LDL-C lowering is desirable. Major changes made to the original 2016 ECDP in this 2017 Focused Update are summarized in Table 1.*

## 2. METHODS

### Background

In 2013, the ACC launched "LDL: Address the Risk" as a multistakeholder quality initiative designed to improve patient outcomes by driving awareness of gaps in lipid management and the importance of managing LDL-related risk. On September 16, 2015, the second LDL: Address the Risk Think Tank meeting was convened to bring together expert clinicians along with a broad set of stakeholders from patient advocacy groups, health plans, pharmacy benefit managers, drug manufacturers, electronic health record vendors, and health systems to discuss the newest developments in management of dyslipidemia and to consider implications for the care of high-risk patients with dyslipidemia. Participants in this LDL: Address the Risk Think Tank identified the need for expert consensus guidance regarding the incorporation of



non-statin therapies into treatment strategies for higher-risk patients as a critical gap in clinical care.

### Process

The guidance that follows in this document was informed by the scientific evidence presented and expert opinions considered during the Think Tank, and by subsequent review and deliberation on available evidence by the expert consensus writing committee. Although the Think Tank provided valuable insight into the practical issues and gaps in care, this document is a separate and independent activity aimed specifically at addressing the questions raised during the meeting.

The work of the writing committee was supported exclusively by the ACC without commercial support. Writing committee members volunteered their time to this effort. Conference calls of the writing committee were confidential and attended only by committee members and society staff. All members of the writing committee, as well as those selected to serve as peer reviewers of this document, were required to disclose relationships with industry and other entities (RWI). Writing committee and peer reviewer RWI relevant to this document are included in [Appendixes 1 and 2](#), respectively. A formal peer review process was completed consistent with ACC policy and included expert reviewers nominated by the ACC (see [Appendix 2](#)). A public comment period was also held to obtain further feedback. Following reconciliation of all comments, this document was approved for publication by the governing bodies of the ACC and endorsed by the National Lipid Association.

The expert consensus writing committee began its deliberations by endorsing the construct of the 4 statin benefit groups identified by the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline ([Table 2](#)) (9). The committee then considered the potential for net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit of the use or addition of non-statin therapies in each of the 4 statin benefit groups. Within each of these groups, higher-risk subgroups were considered separately given the potential for differences in the approach to combination therapy in each of these unique groups.

**Lifestyle intervention:** In agreement with the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline, for all patient groups, the current consensus emphasizes that lifestyle modification (i.e., adherence to a heart-healthy diet, regular exercise habits, avoidance of tobacco products, and maintenance of a healthy weight) remains a critical component of ASCVD risk reduction, both before and in concert with the use of cholesterol-lowering drug therapies. In addition, referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) may be considered to improve understanding of heart-healthy dietary principles and individualize nutrition recommendations. Adherence to lifestyle modification should be regularly assessed at the time of initiation or

modification of statin therapy and during monitoring of ongoing therapy. As this document specifically addresses considerations for the incorporation of non-statin therapies in selected high-risk patient populations, it is critical that the clinician assess and reinforce adherence to intensive lifestyle changes prior to initiation of these additional agents. The reader is referred to the 2013 ACC/AHA Guideline on Lifestyle Management to Reduce Cardiovascular Risk (21) and the National Lipid Association Recommendations for Patient-Centered Management of Dyslipidemia: Part 2 for lifestyle recommendations for healthy adults and management of dyslipidemias (22).

**Monitoring of response to LDL-C lowering therapies:** In agreement with the ACC/AHA guideline, the writing committee recommends the use of an initial fasting lipid panel (TC, triglycerides, HDL-C, and LDL-C), followed by a second lipid panel 4 to 12 weeks after initiation of statin therapy, to determine a patient's adherence and response to statin therapy. Thereafter, assessments should be performed every 3 to 12 months as clinically indicated. Adherence to both medication and lifestyle regimens is required for ASCVD risk reduction. When any modification is made to LDL-C lowering therapy, including intensification of lifestyle intervention, increase in statin intensity, or the addition of non-statin therapies, the writing committee recommends the use of a fasting lipid panel 4 to 12 weeks after treatment modification to determine a patient's adherence and response to therapy. Thereafter, assessments should be performed every 3 to 12 months as clinically indicated.

**Approaches to statin intolerance:** Because the overwhelming body of evidence for ASCVD risk reduction with lipid-lowering therapies is from statin RCTs, evidence-based statin therapy of appropriate intensity is recommended in all 4 statin benefit groups; however, following initiation of therapy, some individuals may experience unacceptable adverse effects when taking the recommended intensity of statin, the most commonly reported being muscle-related symptoms (23). Although muscle-related side effects may occur while on statin therapy, true statin intolerance is uncommon (24,25). A systematic approach to evaluation of possible statin-related adverse effects is critically important to encourage adherence to evidence-based statin treatment. A careful history can help to determine whether symptoms are consistent with statin-related effects, which tend to be myalgias or weakness in large proximal muscle groups. Other causes of muscle symptoms must be ruled out (e.g., hypothyroidism, vitamin D deficiency, recent exercise) and drug-drug interactions that can increase systemic statin exposure must be considered. Some patients, such as women, individuals of Asian descent, and the elderly, may be at increased risk for statin-related muscle symptoms; however, these patients may be able to tolerate a lower statin

intensity, an alternative statin, or alternative dosing strategies.

The approach to statin intolerance should include discontinuation of statin therapy until resolution of symptoms and subsequent rechallenge to verify recurrence of muscle-related symptoms (24). Whereas there is not a universally accepted definition of statin intolerance, most experts recommend that patients are documented to have unacceptable muscle-related symptoms that resolve with discontinuation of therapy and occur with rechallenge on at least 2 to 3 statins, preferably ones that use different metabolic pathways and have different lipophilicity, and 1 of which is prescribed at the lowest approved dose. Although not studied in RCTs, if the lowest dose of multiple statins cannot be tolerated on a daily basis, consideration should be given to alternative dosing strategies such as the use of long half-life statins (atorvastatin, pitavastatin, rosuvastatin) administered 3 times per week or once per week (26). Non-statin therapies are not considered to be an alternative to evidence-based statin therapy unless statin intolerance has been systematically and rigorously evaluated and documented. The [ACC Statin Intolerance App](#) incorporates the guidance of both the ACC/AHA guideline and the National Lipid Association's 2014 Statin Intolerance Panel for the comprehensive evaluation and management of potential statin-related side effects (9,24). The app facilitates and adds structure to the clinician-patient discussion and includes questions to evaluate muscle-related symptoms, step-by-step guidance in the management of statin-related muscle symptoms, and a drug comparison tool for consideration of statin characteristics and potential drug-drug interactions.

**Non-statin therapies:** Currently available strategies and agents that are considered in this document for the management of LDL-related ASCVD risk are described in [Table 4](#). Dietary adjuncts for lowering atherogenic cholesterol may also be considered for patients with dyslipidemia, including phytosterols and soluble dietary fibers (21). As outlined in [Table 4](#), there are important considerations in the choice of non-statin pharmacological agents that may make a treatment modality preferable in specific patient populations (e.g., pregnant women, elderly patients, patients with diabetes). These considerations include the extent of available scientific evidence for net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit, safety and tolerability, potential for drug-drug interactions, efficacy of additional LDL-C lowering, cost, convenience and medication storage, pill burden, route of administration, potential to jeopardize adherence to evidence-based therapies, and importantly, patient preferences. Before initiation of combination therapy, it is imperative for clinicians and patients to engage in a discussion that addresses the potential for net benefit, including absolute

ASCVD risk-reduction benefits and potential harms, prescribing considerations, and patient preferences for treatment ([Table 5](#)) (9).

The expert consensus writing committee undertook an iterative process to determine the higher-risk patient groups that should be considered for additional LDL-C lowering therapies, the appropriate strategies that should be considered for each group, and the order in which those strategies should be considered. The committee first considered a base case of a patient without significant comorbidities within each of the 4 statin benefit groups. The appropriate strategies and the order of consideration were first determined for these patients. Once the committee reached consensus on this scenario, members undertook an iterative process of discussion and consideration of special circumstances for subpopulations with comorbidities, and then updated the strategies in order to create a clinical pathway, or algorithm, that could be followed by clinicians for each patient scenario. All issues were discussed and all pathways were finalized with full consensus of the committee members.

Of note, the writing committee did not consider therapies for severe hypertriglyceridemia (prescription omega-3 fatty acids, fibric acid derivatives), which have been addressed elsewhere recently (26,27). On the basis of currently available evidence of non-efficacy and potential harms, the committee judged that there are no clear indications for the routine use of niacin preparations as additional non-statin therapies, and niacin is not recommended for use in any of the clinical situations addressed below (28).

A bile acid sequestrant (BAS) may be considered as an optional alternative agent for those with ezetimibe intolerance and with triglycerides <300 mg/dL or due to patient preference, but there is no evidence for net cardiovascular risk reduction benefit of BAS in addition to statins (29). The BAS are, therefore, noted only as an option in the footnotes of the following algorithms.

Special populations not included in 1 of the 4 statin benefit groups (patients with heart failure, patients on maintenance hemodialysis, and women considering pregnancy or already pregnant) are considered in a separate section below.

### 3. ASSUMPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

To limit inconsistencies in interpretation, specific assumptions and definitions were considered by the writing committee in the development of this document.

1. The expert consensus writing committee endorses the evidence-based approaches to ASCVD risk reduction in adults enumerated in the 2013 ACC/AHA Guideline on

the Treatment of Blood Cholesterol to Reduce Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Risk in Adults (9).

2. These algorithms begin with the assumption that the patient is in 1 of the 4 evidence-based statin benefit groups identified in the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline:

- a. Patients with clinical ASCVD;
- b. Patients with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL, not due to secondary causes;
- c. Patients aged 40 to 75 years with diabetes mellitus and LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL; and
- d. Patients aged 40 to 75 years with no diabetes, but with LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL and predicted 10-year ASCVD risk  $\geq 7.5\%$ .

Patients not in 1 of these 4 groups who may be at elevated risk for ASCVD events should receive individualized care in the context of shared decision making between the clinician and patient (see [Special Populations](#)).

3. These algorithms assume that the patient is currently taking or has attempted to take a statin, as a result of shared decision making, and that the clinician and patient are trying to determine whether additional therapy is needed to reduce ASCVD risk further.

4. These algorithms were crafted based on the principle of potential net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit, meaning that the potential benefits of additional non-statin therapy should outweigh any potential for harm. Other considerations include the extent of available scientific evidence for safety and tolerability, potential for drug-drug interactions, efficacy of additional LDL-C lowering, cost, convenience and medication storage, pill burden, route of administration, potential to jeopardize adherence to evidence-based therapies, and importantly, patient preferences. Before initiation of combination therapy, it is imperative for clinicians and patients to engage in a discussion that addresses the potential for net benefit, including absolute ASCVD risk-reduction benefits and potential harms, prescribing considerations, and patient preferences for treatment ([Table 5](#)).

5. Critical to the decision-making process for use of additional non-statin therapies in select high-risk patients was the definition of the concept of thresholds for consideration of net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit. The expert consensus writing committee endorsed the evidence-based findings from the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline regarding the use of appropriate intensity statin therapy and the indicators of efficacy (e.g.,  $\geq 50\%$  LDL-C reduction for high-intensity statin doses and 30% to  $<50\%$  reduction for moderate-intensity doses). In addition, the committee

acknowledged that patients in the RCTs demonstrating efficacy and safety of LDL-C lowering therapy tended to achieve absolute LDL-C levels within a given range. Therefore, assuming adherence to therapy, patients with LDL-C levels above that range may not achieve maximal benefit and might be considered for additional therapy. The committee, therefore, judged that it was appropriate to provide levels of LDL-C, or “thresholds,” in terms of both percentage LDL-C reduction from baseline and absolute on-treatment LDL-C measurement, which, if not achieved by adherent patients, would serve as factors to consider in decision making regarding further therapy. The expert consensus writing committee emphasizes that these are not firm triggers for adding medication but factors that may be considered within the broader context of an individual patient’s clinical situation.

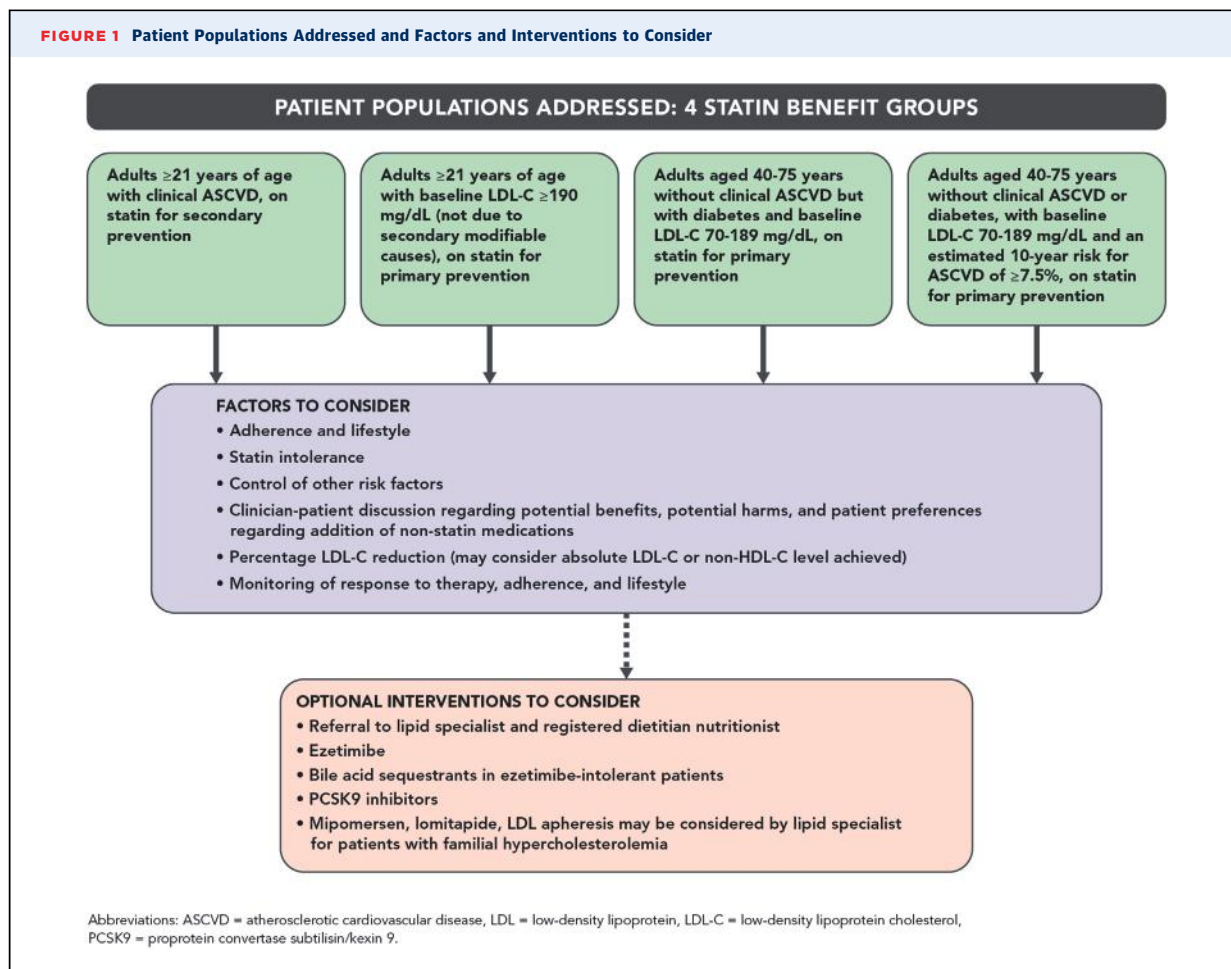
6. The expert consensus writing committee recognizes that there are different means for measuring LDL-C—through direct measurement or calculation using the Friedewald equation. The committee endorses use of the Friedewald equation in most cases, given that the majority of RCTs used this method, that it is the most widely available means in clinical practice, and that it tends to cost less. Nonetheless, the committee acknowledges that there can be significant discrepancies in levels of directly measured versus calculated LDL-C within the same sample, especially at lower LDL-C levels ([29,30](#)). The uncertainty in LDL-C measurement provides further support for the committee’s position that the thresholds for consideration of net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit should merely be factors to be considered and not firm triggers for intensification of therapy.

7. Each algorithm below provides a suggested clinical workflow for consideration of additional therapies. The associated text in this document and the footnotes in the figures provide important context and additional considerations and should be read carefully by users. At the end of this document, several special populations are considered for whom individualized care is recommended.

#### 4. PATHWAY SUMMARY GRAPHIC

**Figure 1** displays the patient populations addressed by the writing committee, factors to consider at each clinical stage, and potential interventions to consider. The solid arrows represent recommended steps, whereas the dashed arrow indicates optional interventions that may be considered. Readers should refer to the individual algorithms for the detailed clinical workflow for each patient scenario.

**FIGURE 1** Patient Populations Addressed and Factors and Interventions to Consider



## 5. DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE: APPROACH TO PATIENT GROUPS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERED FOR ADDITIONAL THERAPY

The expert consensus writing committee created decision pathway algorithms for each of the patient groups, which are described below. For ease of clinical use, these are also summarized in [Figures 2A to 2C, 3, 4, and 5](#).

### Adults $\geq 21$ Years of Age With Clinical ASCVD, on Statin for Secondary Prevention—[Figures 2A to 2C](#)

Patients with clinical ASCVD are defined from the RCT inclusion criteria as those with ACS or history of MI, stable or unstable angina, coronary or other arterial revascularization, stroke, or transient ischemic attack or PAD presumed to be of atherosclerotic origin. The committee identified several subgroups of patients with clinical ASCVD, including those without other comorbidities, those with comorbidities, and those with baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL. Each of these subgroups is addressed in a separate algorithm below.

In the 2016 Expert Consensus Decision Pathway, comorbidities were defined as diabetes, recent ( $<3$  months) ASCVD event, ASCVD event while already taking statin therapy, baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary causes, poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factors, elevated Lp(a), or CKD. The FOURIER trial demonstrated the benefit of evolocumab in patients with clinical ASCVD and at least 1 major risk factor (age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD with prior MI or stroke) or 2 minor risk factors (history of non-MI-related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C  $< 40$  mg/dL for men and  $< 50$  mg/dL for women, hs-CRP  $> 2$  mg/L, or metabolic syndrome). Therefore, the 2017 Focused Update includes the following additional factors that may be considered for the identification of higher-risk patients who may be likely to have net ASCVD risk reduction benefit with the addition of non-statin therapies to maximally tolerated statin: age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette

smoking, symptomatic PAD, history of non-MI related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C  $< 40$  mg/dL for men and  $< 50$  mg/dL for women, hs-CRP  $> 2$  mg/L, or metabolic syndrome (7).

Patients with ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL are addressed in a separate algorithm. Patients with symptomatic heart failure, those on maintenance hemodialysis, and those with planned or current pregnancy require individualized care (see [Special Populations](#) later in the text).

High-intensity statin therapy should be initiated for adults  $\leq 75$  years of age with clinical ASCVD who are not receiving statin therapy or the intensity should be increased in those receiving a low- or moderate-intensity statin, unless they have a history of intolerance to high-intensity statin therapy or have other characteristics that may influence safety (e.g., potential for statin-drug interactions, hepatic or renal dysfunction, frailty, or ethnicity-specific statin-associated risks, among other factors). In individuals with clinical ASCVD in whom high-intensity statin therapy would otherwise be used, when either high-intensity statin therapy is contraindicated or when characteristics predisposing to statin-associated adverse effects are present, moderate-intensity statin therapy should be used as the second option, if tolerated. As noted, if moderate-intensity statins are employed, the objective is to achieve a 30% to  $< 50\%$  reduction of LDL-C, and for high-intensity statins,  $\geq 50\%$  LDL-C reduction.

As per the 2013 ACC/AHA guideline, fewer people  $> 75$  years of age were enrolled in the statin RCTs, but available evidence does support the continuation of statins beyond 75 years of age in persons who are already taking and tolerating these drugs. A larger amount of data supports the use of moderate-intensity statin therapy for secondary prevention in individuals with clinical ASCVD who are  $> 75$  years of age; however, the limited information available does not clearly support initiation of high-intensity statin therapy for secondary prevention in individuals  $> 75$  years of age.

**Stable clinical ASCVD without comorbidities, on statin for secondary prevention—Figure 2A.** Patients in this group have stable chronic ASCVD *without* the presence of the following comorbidities: diabetes, a recent ( $< 3$  months) ASCVD event, an ASCVD event while already taking a statin, poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factors, elevated Lp(a), CKD, symptomatic heart failure, maintenance hemodialysis, baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary causes, age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD, history of non-MI-related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C  $< 40$  mg/dL for men and  $< 50$  mg/dL for women, hs-CRP  $> 2$  mg/L, or

metabolic syndrome (7). These patients should be treated first with maximally tolerated statin intensity. If patients have a  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C from baseline (and may consider LDL-C  $< 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $< 100$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue the statin therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

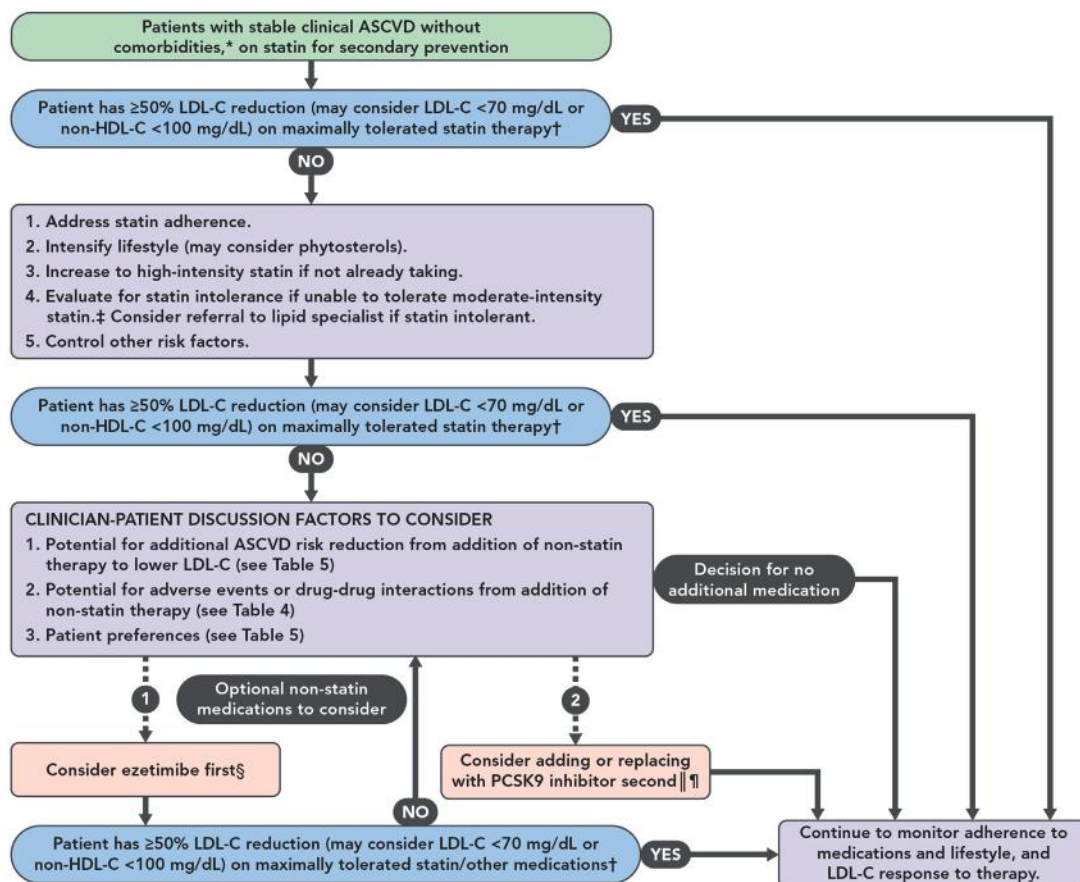
If a patient has a less-than-anticipated response ( $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), additional clinical approaches are warranted. First, the clinician and patient should address statin adherence by assessing the number of missed statin doses per month and evaluating any barriers to adherence. The committee emphasizes that if an adherent patient has not been tried on a high-intensity statin, the dose should be increased to a high-intensity dose at this time. Patients who are unable to tolerate even a moderate-intensity statin should be evaluated for statin intolerance and considered for referral to a lipid specialist. The clinician and patient should attempt to intensify lifestyle modification and may consider the incorporation of soluble dietary fiber and phytosterols as part of this approach. Other major ASCVD risk factors, including tobacco use, diabetes, and elevated blood pressure, should be addressed and controlled as well. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy, with  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $< 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $< 100$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If, after these interventions, the patient still has  $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), the patient and clinician should enter into a discussion focused on shared decision making regarding the addition of a non-statin medication to the current regimen. The clinician-patient discussion is described in [Table 5](#) and should address: the potential for additional ASCVD risk reduction that could be expected from the addition of a non-statin therapy to lower LDL-C further; the potential for adverse events or drug-drug interactions from addition of non-statin therapy ([Table 4](#)); and patient preferences, including considerations of the patient's perception of net benefit, convenience/burden of additional therapy, cost, quality of life, and the potential to jeopardize adherence to other evidence-based therapies. If a decision is made to pursue no additional medication at this point, it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

Although there is a gap in RCT evidence demonstrating outcomes benefits of using ezetimibe plus statin therapy in stable clinical ASCVD patients, the writing committee supports consideration of adding ezetimibe 10 mg daily as



**FIGURE 2A** Patients  $\geq 21$  Years of Age with Stable Clinical ASCVD without Comorbidities, on Statin for Secondary Prevention



Abbreviations: ASCVD = atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, BAS = bile acid sequestrant, HDL-C = high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, LDL-C = low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, PCSK9 = proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9, RDN = registered dietitian nutritionist.

\*Comorbidities are defined as diabetes, a recent ( $<3$  months) ASCVD event, an ASCVD event while already taking a statin, poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factors, elevated Lp(a), CKD, symptomatic heart failure, maintenance hemodialysis, baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary causes, age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD with prior history of MI or stroke, history of non-MI related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C  $< 40$  mg/dL for men and  $< 50$  mg/dL for women, hs-CRP  $> 2$  mg/L, or metabolic syndrome. Patients with ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL are addressed in a separate algorithm. Patients with symptomatic heart failure, those on maintenance hemodialysis, and those with planned or current pregnancy require individualized care.

†The Expert Panel emphasizes that these are not firm triggers for adding medication, but they are factors that may be considered within the broader context of an individual patient's clinical situation.

‡See section on strategy for assessment and management of statin intolerance.

§Clinical variables that may identify patients with the greatest likelihood of benefit from the addition of ezetimibe to statin therapy following ACS include congestive heart failure, hypertension, age  $> 75$  years, diabetes, stroke, CABG, PAD, eGFR  $< 60$  mL/min per  $1.73$  m $^2$ , and smoking. May consider BAS as optional alternative agent if ezetimibe intolerant and triglycerides  $< 300$  mg/dL.

|| Consider only if on maximally tolerated statin therapy and either ezetimibe or BAS, with persistent  $< 50\%$  LDL-C reduction (or may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL). Strongly consider if fully statin intolerant and attempts to lower LDL-C with ezetimibe or BAS result in persistent  $< 50\%$  LDL-C reduction (or may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL). It is reasonable to engage in a clinician-patient discussion with consideration of net risk reduction benefits of a PCSK9 inhibitor, cost, administration by subcutaneous injection, every 14-day or monthly dosing schedule, and storage requirements (refrigeration). Strongly consider a PCSK9 inhibitor if the patient is fully statin intolerant and attempts to lower LDL-C with ezetimibe and/or BAS result in persistent  $< 50\%$  LDL-C reduction or LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $> 100$  mg/dL.

¶Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences.

the initial non-statin agent, given the benefits on ASCVD outcomes and demonstrated safety of ezetimibe in patients with ACS treated with ezetimibe plus simvastatin versus simvastatin monotherapy (Table 4) (21). Considerations that may favor the addition of ezetimibe include: patients who require  $< 25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C, patients with recent ACS  $< 3$  months, cost considerations

with recent availability of generic ezetimibe and future cost savings, ease of use as oral agent with low pill burden, and patient preferences. A recent post-hoc analysis of IMPROVE-IT identified 9 clinical variables (congestive heart failure, hypertension, age  $> 75$  years, diabetes, stroke, CABG, PAD, eGFR  $< 60$  mL/min/ $1.73$  m $^2$ , and smoking) that may help predict patients with the greatest

likelihood of benefit from the addition of ezetimibe to statin therapy following ACS (8). The expert consensus writing committee also noted that there may be interindividual variability in response to ezetimibe, with some patients experiencing >25% reduction in LDL-C (31). If the goals of therapy defined in the clinician-patient discussion have been achieved with addition of ezetimibe, it is reasonable to continue the statin-ezetimibe combination therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If patients with clinical ASCVD without comorbidities, who are on maximally tolerated statin-ezetimibe or non-statin combination therapy in the setting of documented statin intolerance, achieve a less-than-anticipated response with <50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to engage in a clinician-patient discussion with consideration of the net benefit of a PCSK9 inhibitor (in addition to or in place of ezetimibe) as a second step to achieve further LDL-C reduction. Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences. If a PCSK9 inhibitor is prescribed, clinicians should continue maximally tolerated statin and monitoring for adherence to medications and lifestyle, side effects, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If patients with clinical ASCVD require additional LDL-C lowering (<50% reduction in LDL-C, may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL) after the addition of a single non-statin agent to maximally tolerated statin therapy, it is reasonable to consider the addition of a second non-statin agent (i.e., ezetimibe plus PCSK9 inhibitor). However, patients who have already been treated with high-dose statins or combination lipid-lowering therapy may have slightly less capacity to further up-regulate LDL-receptor activity with PCSK9 inhibition or may require higher doses of the PCSK9 inhibitor (32).

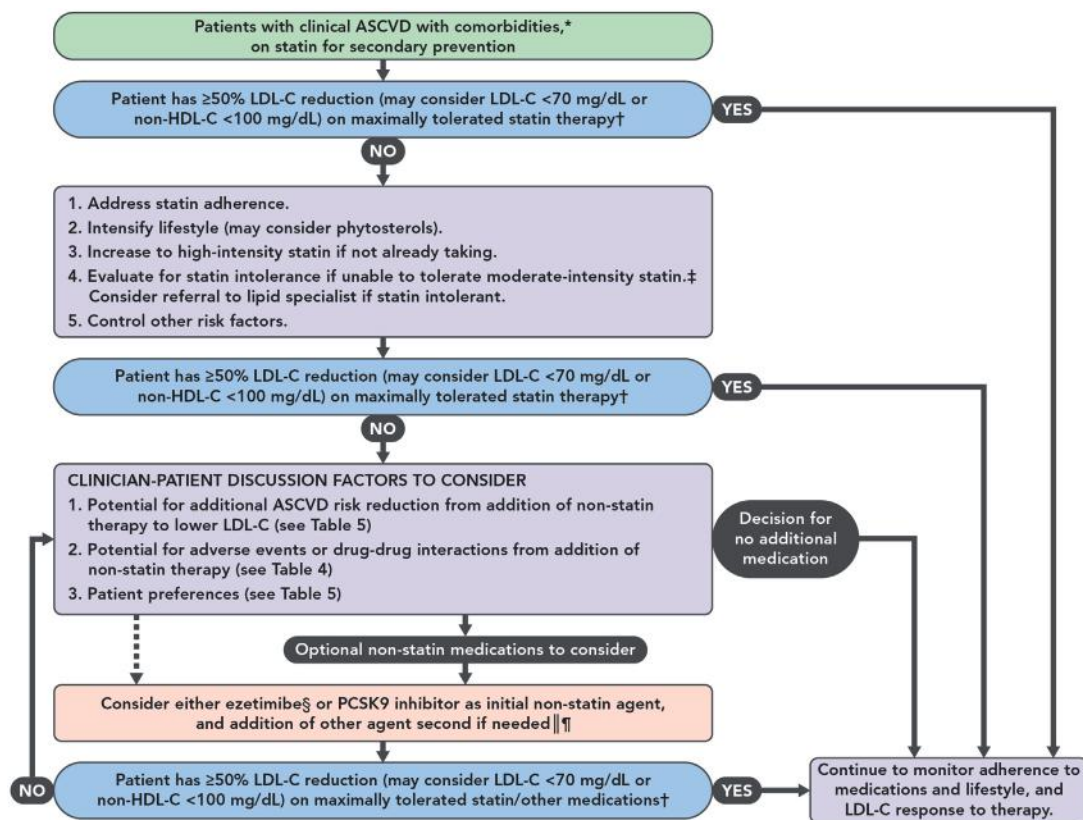
**Clinical ASCVD with comorbidities, on statin for secondary prevention—Figure 2B.** Patients in this group have clinical ASCVD with comorbidities that may include: diabetes, a recent (<3 months) ASCVD event, an ASCVD event while already taking a statin, poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factors, elevated Lp(a), CKD, symptomatic heart failure, maintenance hemodialysis, age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD, history of non-MI-related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C <40 mg/dL for men and <50 mg/dL for women, hs-CRP >2 mg/L, or metabolic syndrome. Patients with clinical ASCVD and comorbidities should be treated first with maximally tolerated statin intensity. If patients have

achieved a  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C from baseline (and may consider LDL-C <70 mg/dL or non-HDL-C <100 mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue statin therapy and monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If a patient has a less-than-anticipated response (<50% reduction in LDL-C and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), additional clinical approaches are warranted. First, the clinician and patient should address statin adherence by assessing the number of missed statin doses per month and evaluating any barriers to adherence. The committee emphasizes that if an adherent patient has not been tried on a high-intensity statin, the dose should be increased to a high-intensity dose at this time. Patients who are unable to tolerate even a moderate-intensity statin should be evaluated for statin intolerance and considered for referral to a lipid specialist. The clinician and patient should attempt to intensify lifestyle modification and may consider the incorporation of soluble dietary fiber and phytosterols as part of this approach. Other major ASCVD risk factors, including tobacco use, diabetes, and elevated blood pressure, should be addressed and controlled as well. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy, with  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C <70 mg/dL or non-HDL-C <100 mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If, after these interventions, the patient still has <50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), the patient and clinician should enter into a discussion focused on shared decision making regarding the addition of a non-statin medication to the current regimen. The clinician-patient discussion is described in Table 5 and should address: the potential for additional ASCVD risk reduction that could be expected from the addition of a non-statin therapy to lower LDL-C further; the potential for adverse events or drug-drug interactions from addition of non-statin therapy (Table 4); and patient preferences, including considerations of the patient's perception of net benefit, convenience/burden of additional therapy, cost, quality of life, and the potential to jeopardize adherence to other evidence-based therapies. If a decision is made to pursue no additional medication at this point, it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If a decision is made to proceed with the addition of non-statin therapy to maximally tolerated statin therapy, based on the results of IMPROVE-IT and FOURIER demonstrating improved cardiovascular outcomes and excellent safety profiles, it is reasonable to consider the addition of **either** ezetimibe **or** a PCSK9 inhibitor as the

**FIGURE 2B Patients  $\geq 21$  Years of Age with Clinical ASCVD with Comorbidities, on Statin for Secondary Prevention**

Abbreviations: ASCVD = atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, BAS = bile acid sequestrant, HDL-C = high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, LDL-C = low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, PCSK9 = proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9, RDN = registered dietitian nutritionist.

\*Comorbidities are defined as diabetes, a recent (<3 months) ASCVD event, an ASCVD event while already taking a statin, poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factors, elevated Lp(a), CKD, symptomatic heart failure, maintenance hemodialysis, baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary causes, age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD with prior history of MI or stroke, history of non-MI related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C  $< 40$  mg/dL for men and  $< 50$  mg/dL for women, hs-CRP  $> 2$  mg/L, or metabolic syndrome. Patients with ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL are addressed in a separate algorithm. Patients with symptomatic heart failure, those on maintenance hemodialysis, and those with planned or current pregnancy require individualized care.

†The Expert Panel emphasizes that these are not firm triggers for adding medication, but they are factors that may be considered within the broader context of an individual patient's clinical situation.

‡See section on strategy for assessment and management of statin intolerance.

§Considerations that may favor initial choice of ezetimibe include: patients who require  $< 25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C, patients with recent ACS  $< 3$  months, cost considerations with recent availability of generic ezetimibe and future cost savings, ease of use as oral agent with low pill burden, and patient preferences. Clinical variables that may identify patients with the greatest likelihood of benefit from the addition of ezetimibe to statin therapy following ACS include congestive heart failure, hypertension, age  $> 75$  years, diabetes, stroke, CABG, PAD, eGFR  $< 60$  mL/min per  $1.73$  m<sup>2</sup>, and smoking. May consider BAS as optional alternative agent if ezetimibe intolerant and triglycerides  $< 300$  mg/dL.

¶If patients with clinical ASCVD and comorbidities require  $> 25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C, a PCSK9 inhibitor may be preferred as the initial non-statin agent. It is reasonable to engage in a clinician-patient discussion with consideration of net risk reduction benefits of a PCSK9 inhibitor, cost, administration by subcutaneous injection, every 14-day or monthly dosing schedule, and storage requirements (refrigeration). Consider only if on maximally tolerated statin therapy with persistent  $< 50\%$  LDL-C reduction (or may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL). Strongly consider if fully statin intolerant and attempts to lower LDL-C with ezetimibe or BAS result in persistent  $< 50\%$  LDL-C reduction (or may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL).

||Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences.

initial non-statin agent. Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences (Figure 2B) (2,6).

Although there is a gap in RCT evidence demonstrating outcomes benefits of using ezetimibe plus statin in stable clinical ASCVD patients, the writing committee supports

that ezetimibe 10 mg daily may be considered as the initial non-statin agent for most patients in whom additional LDL-C lowering is desired. Considerations that may favor initial choice of ezetimibe include: patients who require  $< 25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C, patients with recent ACS  $< 3$  months, cost considerations with recent availability of generic ezetimibe and future cost savings, ease of use as oral agent with low pill burden, and patient



preferences. A recent post-hoc analysis of IMPROVE-IT identified 9 clinical variables (congestive heart failure, hypertension, age  $\geq 75$  years, diabetes, stroke, CABG, PAD, eGFR  $< 60$  ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>, and smoking) that may help predict patients after ACS with the greatest likelihood of benefit from the addition of ezetimibe to statin therapy following ACS (8). The expert consensus writing committee also noted that there may be interindividual variability in response to ezetimibe, with some patients experiencing  $> 20\%$  reduction in LDL-C (31).

If the goals of therapy defined in the clinician-patient discussion have been achieved with addition of ezetimibe, it is reasonable to continue the statin-ezetimibe combination therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If patients with clinical ASCVD and comorbidities require  $> 25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C, a PCSK9 inhibitor may be preferred as the initial non-statin agent. Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences. The interindividual variability in response to evolocumab has not been reported. It is reasonable to engage in a clinician-patient discussion with consideration of net risk reduction benefits of a PCSK9 inhibitor, cost, administration by subcutaneous injection, every 14-day or monthly dosing schedule, and storage requirements (refrigeration). If a PCSK9 inhibitor is prescribed, clinicians should continue maximally tolerated statin and monitoring for adherence to medications and lifestyle, side effects, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

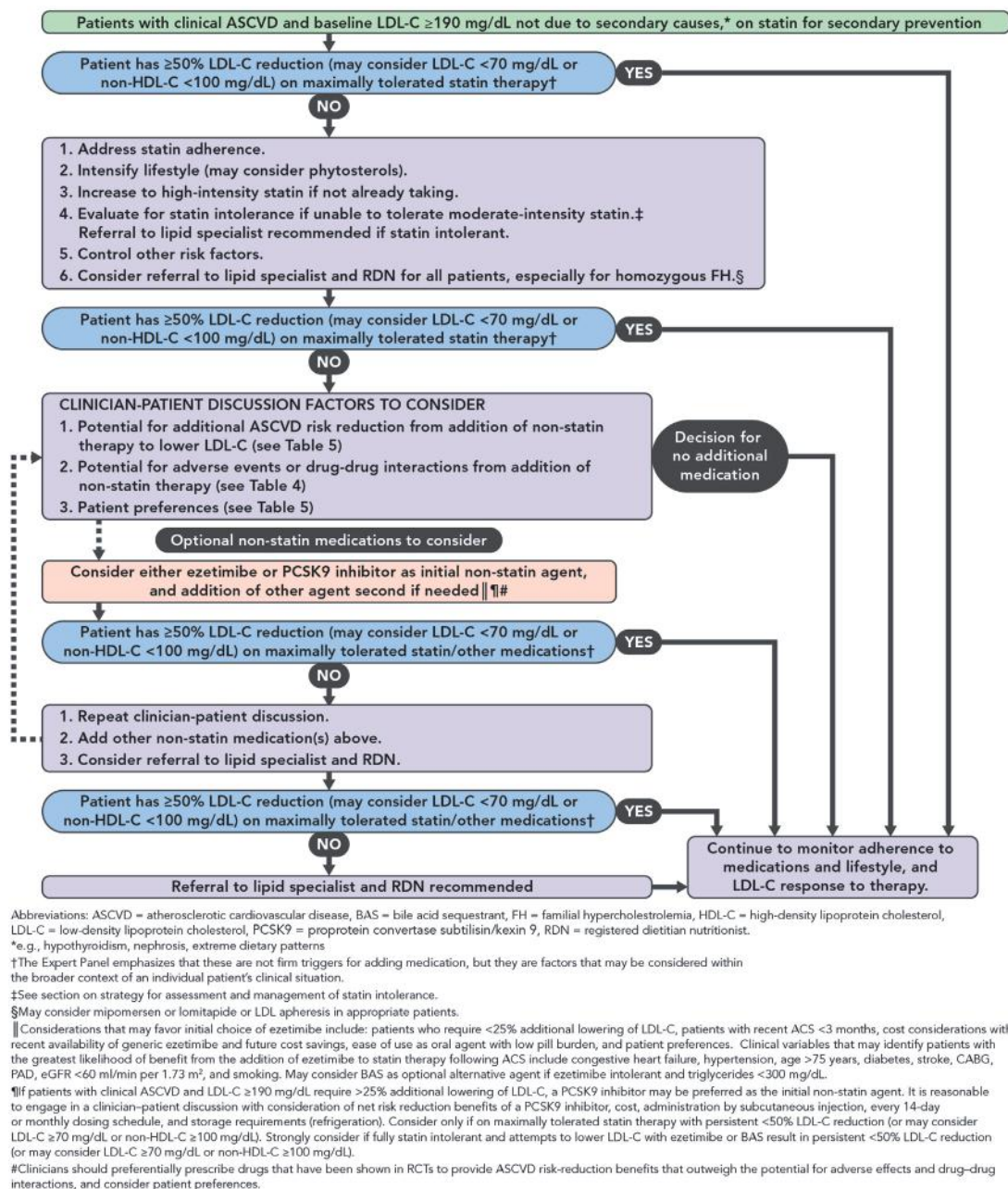
If higher-risk patients with clinical ASCVD require additional LDL-C lowering (patient has achieved  $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C, may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL) after the additional of a single non-statin agent to maximally tolerated statin therapy, it is reasonable to consider the addition of a second non-statin agent (i.e., ezetimibe plus PCSK9 inhibitor). However, patients who have already been treated with high-dose statins or combination lipid-lowering therapy may have slightly less capacity to further up-regulate LDL-receptor activity with PCSK9 inhibition or may require higher doses of the PCSK9 inhibitor (20).

**Clinical ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary causes, on statin for secondary prevention—Figure 2C.** Patients with ASCVD and primary, severe elevations of LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL are at very high risk for future ASCVD events because of their lifetime exposure to markedly elevated LDL-C levels. This risk is accelerated in the presence of other ASCVD risk factors (8,33). Most patients with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL have polygenic hypercholesterolemia. However, these individuals

are more likely to have HeFH or HoFH, genetic disorders associated with severe hypercholesterolemia and a family history of severe hypercholesterolemia and premature ASCVD (Table 6) (34). Early treatment is highly beneficial. Long-term drug therapy in patients with severe hypercholesterolemia can substantially reduce the risk of ASCVD and requires lifelong treatment with regular follow-up. Referral to a lipid specialist should be strongly considered for patients with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL and is definitely recommended for children, adolescents, women during pregnancy, and patients with HoFH or severe HeFH (35-37). Because hypercholesterolemia in these high-risk individuals may be genetically determined, family screening is especially important in this group to identify additional family members who would benefit from assessment and early treatment. Cascade screening, a process of systematic assessment of close biological relatives, should be performed for all patients with HeFH or HoFH to identify others with the disease who would benefit from treatment (38).

The approach to management of patients with clinical ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL is similar to the algorithm for patients with clinical ASCVD and comorbidities. If patients have  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C from baseline (and may consider LDL-C  $< 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $< 100$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue statin therapy, monitor adherence to medication and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy. In patients who have a less-than-anticipated response on maximally tolerated statin therapy with  $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL and non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), the clinician and patient should address statin adherence by assessing the number of missed statin doses per month and evaluating any barriers to adherence. The committee emphasizes that if an adherent patient has not been tried on high-intensity statin, the dose should be increased to a high-intensity dose at this time. Patients who are unable to tolerate even a moderate-intensity statin should be evaluated for statin intolerance and considered for referral to a lipid specialist. Other major ASCVD risk factors, including tobacco use, elevated blood pressure, and diabetes, should be controlled as well. The committee also emphasizes that all such patients should be considered for referral to a lipid specialist and RDN, especially if they have documented HoFH. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy ( $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C and may consider LDL-C  $< 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $< 100$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If, after these interventions, the patient still has  $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), the patient and clinician

**FIGURE 2C** Patients  $\geq 21$  Years of Age with Clinical ASCVD and Baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL Not Due to Secondary Causes, on Statin for Secondary Prevention

should enter into a discussion focused on shared decision making regarding the addition of a non-statin medication to the current regimen (Table 4). If a decision is made to proceed with the addition of non-statin therapy to maximally tolerated statin therapy, based on the results of IMPROVE-IT and FOURIER demonstrating improved cardiovascular outcomes and excellent safety profiles, it is reasonable to consider the addition of **either** ezetimibe **or**

a PCSK9 inhibitor as the initial non-statin agent. Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences. (Table 4) (2,6).

Although there is a gap in RCT evidence demonstrating outcomes benefits of using ezetimibe plus statin therapy



in clinical ASCVD patients with baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL, the expert consensus writing committee supports that ezetimibe 10 mg daily may be considered as the initial non-statin agent for patients in whom additional LDL-C lowering is desired. Considerations that may favor initial choice of ezetimibe include: patients who require  $<25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C, patients with recent ACS  $<3$  months, cost considerations with recent availability of generic ezetimibe, ease of use as oral agent with low pill burden, and patient preferences. A recent post-hoc analysis of IMPROVE-IT identified 9 clinical variables (congestive heart failure, hypertension, age  $>75$  years, diabetes, stroke, CABG, PAD, eGFR  $<60$  ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>, and smoking) that may help predict patients after ACS with the greatest likelihood of benefit from the addition of ezetimibe to statin therapy following ACS (8). The expert consensus writing committee also noted that there is interindividual variability in response to ezetimibe, with some patients experiencing  $>25\%$  reduction in LDL-C (8).

If patients with clinical ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL require  $>25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C or have additional comorbidities as defined in the previous text, a PCSK9 inhibitor may be preferred as the initial non-statin agent. Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences. It is reasonable to engage in a clinician-patient discussion with consideration of net risk reduction benefits of a PCSK9 inhibitor, as well as cost, administration by subcutaneous injection, every 14-day or monthly dosing schedule, and storage requirements (refrigeration).

If patients with clinical ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL require additional LDL-C lowering (patient has achieved  $<50\%$  reduction in LDL-C, may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL) after the additional of a single non-statin agent to maximally tolerated statin therapy, it is reasonable to consider the addition of a second non-statin agent (i.e., ezetimibe plus PCSK9 inhibitor). However, patients who have already been treated with high-dose statins or combination lipid-lowering therapy may have slightly less capacity to further up-regulate LDL-receptor activity with PCSK9 inhibition or may require higher doses of antibody (32).

If combination statin and non-statin therapy with ezetimibe and/or a PCSK9 inhibitor have been attempted and the patient still has  $<50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 70$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL), the committee recommends referral to a lipid specialist and RDN.

Specialized therapies, such as mipomersen, lomitapide, or LDL apheresis, may be needed to control LDL-C in

patients with ASCVD and baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL and/or phenotypic HoFH who have an inadequate response to statins with or without ezetimibe and PCSK9 inhibitors (Table 4) (39). In the opinion of the expert consensus writing committee, these therapies are best administered under the care of a lipid specialist. LDL apheresis may be considered in patients with ASCVD and phenotypic HeFH and LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL despite maximally tolerated statin with or without ezetimibe and PCSK9 inhibitors (40). The writing committee has recommended using 190 mg/dL on maximal treatment as the level at which LDL apheresis should be considered in such patients, in order to remain consistent with the cutoffs employed in the ACC/AHA guideline. In those with phenotypic HoFH, evolocumab should be considered before LDL apheresis except in those who have been documented to be LDL receptor negative (41).

#### **Adults $\geq 21$ Years of Age With LDL-Cholesterol $\geq 190$ mg/dL (Not Due to Secondary Modifiable Causes) on Statin for Primary Prevention—Figure 3**

Patients with baseline elevation of LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary modifiable causes are at very high risk of first and recurrent ASCVD events because of their lifetime exposure to markedly elevated LDL-C levels, and therefore, 10-year ASCVD risk assessment is not indicated in this high-risk population. Rather, the suggested algorithm in Figure 3 should be followed. ASCVD risk is accelerated in the presence of other ASCVD risk factors (35,36). Most patients with LDL  $\geq 190$  mg/dL have polygenic hypercholesterolemia. However, these individuals are more likely to have HeFH or HoFH, genetic disorders associated with severe hypercholesterolemia, and a family history of severe hypercholesterolemia and premature ASCVD (Table 6). This disorder has an autosomal codominant pattern of inheritance and is caused most commonly by mutations in the gene coding for the LDL receptor, with  $>1,600$  different identified mutations (38). Pooled data from 6 large U.S. epidemiological studies of individuals at index ages 20 to 79 years demonstrated increased risk of ASCVD events for those with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL as compared to those with LDL-C  $<130$  mg/dL (hazard ratio: 5.0 for CHD and 4.1 for ASCVD) (33). A U.S. and European gene sequencing study of 26,025 individuals with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL showed an almost 4-fold increase in the odds for coronary artery disease events in those with defined deleterious mutations of LDLR, APOB, or PCSK9 as compared to those with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL in the absence of those mutations (34). Early treatment is highly beneficial. Long-term drug therapy in patients with severe hypercholesterolemia can substantially reduce the risk of ASCVD and requires lifelong treatment with regular follow-up. Referral to a lipid specialist should be considered for patients with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL and is

definitely recommended for children, adolescents, women during pregnancy, and patients with HoFH or severe HeFH (35,36).

Because hypercholesterolemia in these high-risk individuals is often genetically determined, family screening is especially important in this group to identify additional family members who would benefit from assessment and early treatment. Cascade screening, a process of systematic assessment of close biological relatives, should be performed in all people with HeFH or HoFH to identify others with the disease who would benefit from treatment (38).

Depending on the gene mutation, expression, and pattern of inheritance (i.e., homozygous or heterozygous), patients with LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL may have variable responses to pharmacological therapies. Therefore, response to lifestyle modification and maximally tolerated statin therapy should be monitored, reversible ASCVD risk factors must be treated, and more intensive combination therapy may be indicated. A low-saturated fat, low-cholesterol diet should be encouraged in all patients with severe hypercholesterolemia and patients should be referred to an RDN; however, even with strict adherence, diet has limited impact on the severity of hypercholesterolemia in this high-risk patient population (39).

**LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL with or without concomitant ASCVD risk factors—Figure 3.** Although all patients with baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL are at high risk for first and recurrent ASCVD events because of their lifetime exposure, the presence of concomitant risk factors or risk markers for ASCVD (including a family history of premature ASCVD events, tobacco use, diabetes, hypertension, CKD, evidence of subclinical atherosclerosis, elevated Lp(a), or elevated hs-CRP) further increases ASCVD risk significantly. Management of these patients should address and attempt to control all other causal ASCVD risk factors to the extent possible.

These patients should be treated first with maximally tolerated statin therapy. If patients have a  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C from baseline (and may consider LDL-C  $< 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $< 130$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue statin therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medication and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy. In patients who have a less-than-anticipated response on maximally tolerated statin therapy with  $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), the clinician and patient should address statin adherence by assessing the number of missed statin doses per month and evaluating any barriers to adherence. The committee emphasizes that if an adherent patient has not been tried on high-intensity statin, the dose should be increased to a high-intensity dose at this time. If the patient is unable to tolerate even a moderate-intensity statin, he or she should be evaluated

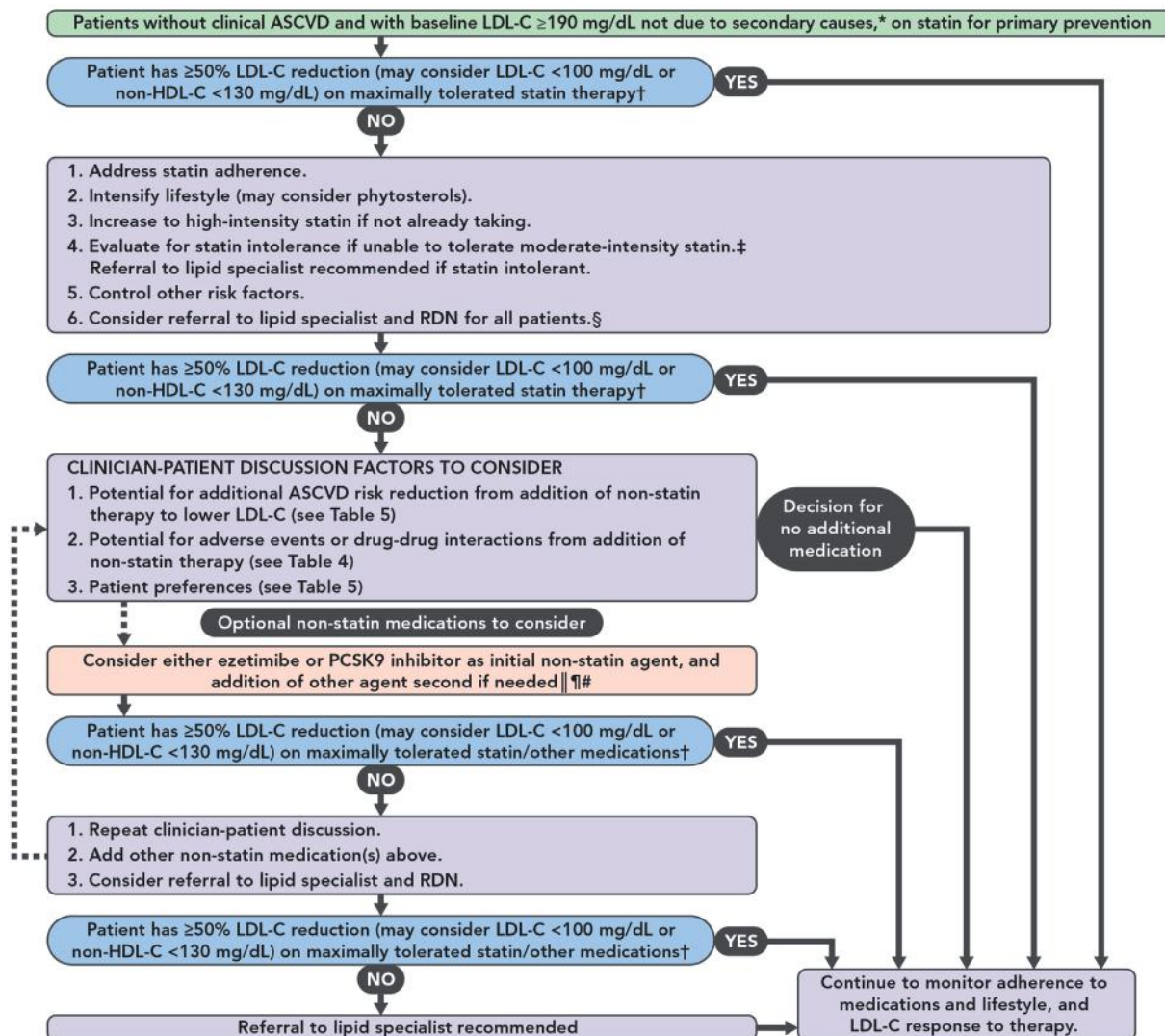
for statin intolerance and considered for referral to a lipid specialist. Other major ASCVD risk factors, including tobacco use, elevated blood pressure, and diabetes, should be controlled as well. The committee also emphasizes that all such patients should be considered for referral to a lipid specialist and RDN, especially if the patient has documented HoFH. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy ( $> 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C and may consider LDL-C  $< 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $< 130$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If, after these interventions, the patient still has  $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), the patient and clinician should enter into a discussion focused on shared decision making regarding the addition of a non-statin medication to the current regimen (Table 5). Consideration may be given to **either** ezetimibe **or** a PCSK9 inhibitor in combination with maximally tolerated statin therapy in these very high-risk patients. Clinicians should preferentially prescribe drugs that have been shown in RCTs to provide ASCVD risk-reduction benefits that outweigh the potential for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, and consider patient preferences. Although there is a gap in the evidence demonstrating outcomes benefit when combined with high-intensity statin therapy in primary prevention, the addition of ezetimibe may be considered given the improved ASCVD outcomes and demonstrated safety of the combination of ezetimibe with moderate-intensity simvastatin versus simvastatin monotherapy (6). Considerations that may favor ezetimibe as the initial non-statin agent include:  $< 25\%$  additional lowering of LDL-C desired, cost considerations with availability of generic preparation, ease of use as oral agent with low pill burden, and patient preferences. The expert consensus writing committee also noted that there is interindividual variability in response to ezetimibe, with some patients experiencing  $> 20\%$  reduction in LDL-C. Considerations that may favor a PCSK9 inhibitor as the initial non-statin agent include:  $> 25\%$  additional LDL-C desired, presence of additional ASCVD risk factors or conditions (see the previous text), and patient preferences.

If high-risk patients with baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL require additional LDL-C lowering ( $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C, may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL) after the addition of a single non-statin agent (i.e., ezetimibe) to maximally tolerated statin therapy, it is reasonable to consider the addition of a second non-statin agent (i.e., ezetimibe plus PCSK9 inhibitor).

Individualization of therapy may be appropriate for some patients with baseline LDL-C  $> 190$  mg/dL on statin therapy for primary prevention based on clinical

**FIGURE 3** Patients  $\geq 21$  Years of Age without Clinical ASCVD and with Baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL Not Due to Secondary Causes, on Statin for Primary Prevention



judgment. The committee notes that for patients with baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL and without other high-risk features or comorbidities, achievement of  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C <130 mg/dL) may

be a reasonable therapeutic outcome that does not require further intensification of therapy. In addition, for patients with baseline LDL-C >190 mg/dL and multiple high-risk features or evidence of significant subclinical

atherosclerosis, failure to achieve >50% reduction in LDL-C and LDL-C <70 mg/dL or non-HDL-C <100 mg/dL may prompt consideration of intensification of therapy following patient-clinician discussion.

Specialized therapies may be needed to control LDL-C in patients with or without concomitant ASCVD risk factors and LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL. Mipomersen and lomitapide are only approved for the treatment of HoFH and may be prescribed at the discretion of lipid specialists. The mechanisms of action of these novel agents do not involve upregulation of the LDL receptor and may be of particular benefit in LDL receptor-negative HoFH patients. LDL apheresis may be considered by lipid specialists in patients with phenotypic HeFH and LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL despite maximally tolerated medical therapy, and for all patients with phenotypic HoFH with LDL-C  $\geq 300$  mg/dL on maximally tolerated therapy, including evolocumab.

**LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL and pregnancy.** Special consideration for lipid management is needed in all premenopausal women and during pregnancy with or without familial hypercholesterolemia (FH) (see [Special Populations](#) section). Statins should only be used women who are using effective contraception and are not nursing, or who are post-menopausal.

**Familial hypercholesterolemia in children and adolescents.** Management of FH in children and adolescents is beyond the scope of this manuscript and has been reviewed in detail elsewhere. The reader is referred to references cited for excellent guidance on this important topic ([35,36](#)).

#### **Adults Aged 40 to 75 Years Without ASCVD, but With Diabetes and LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL, on Statin for Primary Prevention—Figure 4**

Patients with diabetes are at higher risk for ASCVD events due to diabetes itself and also to the concomitant burden of other cardiometabolic risk factors that tend to cluster in patients with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Higher-risk subgroups of patients with diabetes are potential candidates for high-intensity statin therapy. Thus, all patients with diabetes aged 40 to 75 years should undergo assessment of 10-year ASCVD risk and comprehensive risk factor evaluation. Furthermore, the effects of acute ASCVD events appear to be more severe among patients with diabetes, making intensive prevention efforts even more necessary.

**Diabetes and LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL with 10-year ASCVD risk <7.5% and without high-risk features (retinopathy, CKD [eGFR <60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>], albuminuria [urinary albumin/creatinine ratio >30 mg/g], elevated Lp(a) [>30 mg/dL], hs-CRP [>2 mg/dL], or presence of subclinical atherosclerosis) on statin for primary prevention (Figure 4, bottom).** For the small proportion of patients aged 40 to 75 years with diabetes, with 10-year

ASCVD <7.5%, and without high-risk features, a high level of evidence supports the use of moderate-intensity statin therapy (anticipated LDL-C reduction 30% to <50%) ([9](#)). The expert consensus writing committee judges that a special comment is necessary regarding management in this subgroup. In addition to adherence to appropriate lifestyle interventions, use of soluble dietary fiber and phytosterols may also be considered. Younger patients without ASCVD but with ASCVD risk factors typically have low 10-year predicted risks for ASCVD but high lifetime predicted risks. In such patients, it is reasonable to consider lifetime risks for ASCVD, as recommended by the 2013 risk assessment guidelines ([10](#)). However, making decisions for drug therapy based on lifetime ASCVD risk is problematic because of the limited data on treatment of younger adults and on long-term safety and efficacy of lipid-lowering therapy. Nonetheless, consideration of lifetime risk estimates in counseling patients may be useful to motivate lifestyle changes or adherence to therapy.

In patients with diabetes who achieve inadequate lowering of LDL-C or non-HDL-C despite adherence to lifestyle recommendations and moderate-intensity statin therapy, the recommended threshold for consideration of the net benefit of increasing to high-intensity statin therapy is failure to achieve 30% to <50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider on-treatment LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL).

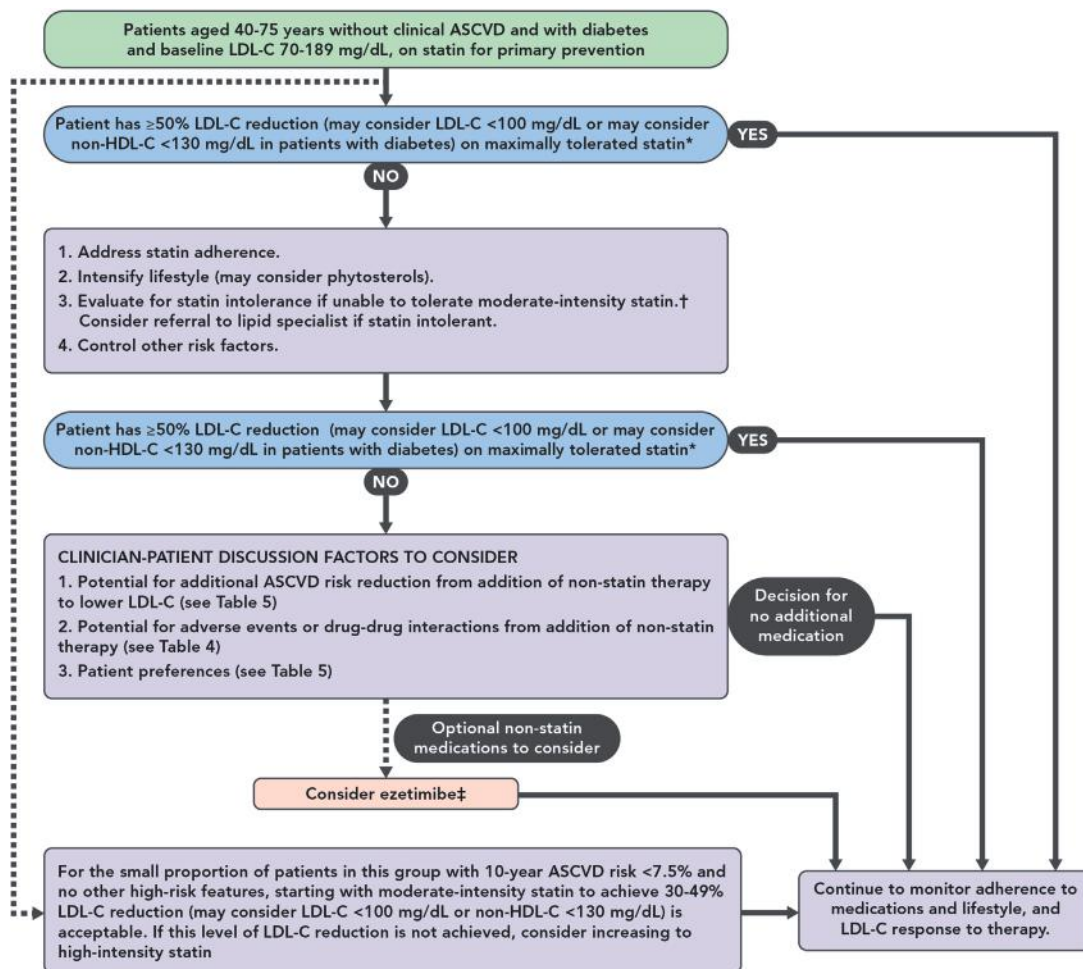
If a patient with diabetes and 10-year ASCVD risk <7.5% without high-risk features has a less-than-anticipated response, with <30% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), additional clinical approaches may be warranted. Intensification of lifestyle modification should be addressed and statin adherence should be evaluated, including the number of missed statin doses per month and consideration of barriers to adherence. Other major ASCVD risk factors, including tobacco use and elevated blood pressure, should be addressed and controlled as well. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy, with 30% to <50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C <100 mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If, after these interventions, the patient still has <30% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), the patient and clinician may consider increasing the statin dose to a high-intensity statin. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy, it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If escalation to high-intensity statin results in <50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), the clinician and patient



**FIGURE 4** Patients Aged 40-75 years without Clinical ASCVD and with Diabetes and Baseline LDL-C 70-189 mg/dL, on Statin for Primary Prevention



Abbreviations: ASCVD = atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, BAS = bile acid sequestrant, HDL-C = high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, LDL-C = low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, RDN = registered dietitian nutritionist.

\*The Expert Panel emphasizes that these are not firm triggers for adding medication, but they are factors that may be considered within the broader context of an individual patient's clinical situation.

†See section on strategy for assessment and management of statin intolerance.

‡May consider BAS as optional alternative agent if ezetimibe intolerant and triglycerides <300 mg/dL.

should enter into a discussion focused on shared decision making regarding the addition of a non-statin medication to the current regimen (Table 5). If a decision is made to pursue no additional medication at this point, it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

In patients with diabetes and <7.5% predicted 10-year ASCVD risk on maximally tolerated statin therapy, the potential for net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit of combination therapy may be considered in patients with <50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C ≥100 mg/dL or non-HDL-C ≥130 mg/dL). Although there is a gap in

RCT evidence demonstrating outcomes benefits of using ezetimibe plus statin in primary prevention with diabetes mellitus, the writing committee supports that ezetimibe 10 mg daily may be considered as the initial non-statin agent for most patients in whom additional LDL-C lowering is desired. Ezetimibe is the preferred initial non-statin therapy due to demonstrated safety, tolerability, convenience, and single-tablet daily dose. BAS may have a modest hypoglycemic effect that may be of benefit in some diabetic patients if fasting triglycerides are <300 mg/dL. BAS may also be considered if patients have an inadequate response to ezetimibe or if patients are ezetimibe intolerant.



In the absence of ASCVD or baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary causes, the PCSK9 inhibitors do not have an established role for primary prevention of ASCVD in patients with diabetes. Referral to a lipid specialist is recommended for patients with diabetes and statin intolerance, baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL not due to secondary causes, complex mixed dyslipidemias, or severe hypertriglyceridemia.

**Diabetes and LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL with 10-year ASCVD risk  $\geq 7.5\%$  or high risk features on statin for primary prevention (Figure 4).** The committee identified higher-risk subgroups of patients with diabetes for special consideration, including those with concomitant ASCVD risk factors, predicted 10-year ASCVD risk  $> 7.5\%$  by the Pooled Cohort Equations, retinopathy, CKD [eGFR  $< 60$  ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>], albuminuria [urinary albumin/creatinine ratio  $> 30$  mg/g], elevated Lp(a) [ $> 30$  mg/dL], hs-CRP [ $> 2$  mg/dL], or presence of subclinical atherosclerosis. Management of these patients should include strategies to control all other causal ASCVD risk factors to the greatest extent possible. Higher-risk subgroups of patients with diabetes are potential candidates for high-intensity statin therapy.

The only trial of high-intensity statin therapy in primary prevention was performed in a population without diabetes (36); however, the high level of evidence considered by the ACC/AHA expert panel for event reduction with statin therapy in individuals with a  $\geq 7.5\%$  estimated 10-year ASCVD risk who did not have diabetes was sufficiently compelling to recommend high-intensity statin therapy preferentially for patients with diabetes aged 40 to 75 years with a  $\geq 7.5\%$  estimated 10-year ASCVD. This recommendation recognized that these individuals are at substantially increased lifetime risk for ASCVD events, death, and significantly greater morbidity and worse survival following the onset of clinical ASCVD. In addition to intensive lifestyle modifications, the addition of soluble dietary fiber and phytosterols may also be incorporated in primary prevention patients with diabetes prior to consideration of combination therapy with a non-statin agent.

In higher-risk patients with diabetes who achieve inadequate lowering of LDL-C or non-HDL-C with high-intensity statin therapy, the potential net ASCVD risk-reduction benefit of combination therapy may be considered for patients with  $< 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL). Although there is a gap in RCT evidence demonstrating outcomes benefits of using ezetimibe plus statin in primary prevention patients with diabetes, the writing committee supports that ezetimibe 10 mg daily may be considered as the initial non-statin agent for most patients in whom additional LDL-C lowering is desired. Ezetimibe is preferred as the initial non-statin therapy due to its

tolerability, convenience, and single-tablet daily dose. BAS have a modest hypoglycemic effect that may be of benefit in some diabetic patients with fasting triglycerides  $< 300$  mg/dL. BAS may be considered in patients who have an inadequate response to ezetimibe or are ezetimibe intolerant. Of note, the writing committee did not consider therapies (prescription omega-3 fatty acids, fibric acid derivatives) for severe hypertriglyceridemia, which is common in patients with diabetes, since this topic has been addressed elsewhere recently (26,27).

In the absence of ASCVD or baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL, the committee judges that at present, PCSK9 inhibitors do not have an established role for primary prevention of ASCVD in patients with diabetes. Referral to a lipid specialist is recommended for diabetic patients with statin intolerance, baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL, complex mixed dyslipidemias, and severe hypertriglyceridemia.

#### **Adults Aged 40 to 75 Years Without Clinical ASCVD or Diabetes, With LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL and an Estimated 10-Year Risk for ASCVD of $\geq 7.5\%$ , on Statin for Primary Prevention—Figure 5**

Patients without clinical ASCVD or diabetes, who have LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL and an estimated 10-year risk for ASCVD of  $\geq 7.5\%$ , were found to be in a group with net benefit from statin therapy by the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline panel (9). Based on a high level of evidence, the guideline recommended that these patients be considered for treatment with moderate- to high-intensity statin. Younger patients without ASCVD but with ASCVD risk factors typically have low 10-year predicted risks for ASCVD but high lifetime predicted risks. In such patients, it is reasonable to consider lifetime risks for ASCVD, as recommended by the 2013 risk assessment guidelines (10). However, making decisions for drug therapy based on lifetime ASCVD risk is problematic because of the limited data on treatment of younger adults and on long-term safety and efficacy of lipid-lowering therapy. Nonetheless, consideration of lifetime risk estimates in counseling patients may be useful to motivate lifestyle changes or adherence to therapy.

In primary prevention patients, the clinician-patient discussion prior to the initiation of a statin is particularly important in order to consider factors that might increase or decrease the individual patient's predicted risk, potential absolute benefits and harms from statin therapy, possible drug-drug interactions, and patient preferences for prevention approaches. In the opinion of the writing committee, non-statin agents should play a limited role in primary prevention given the lack of RCT data when added to statin and should be reserved only for patients who have not achieved sufficient lowering of LDL-C after intensification of moderate- to high-intensity statin dosing or who have been rigorously evaluated and systematically documented to be statin-intolerant. Because the net ASCVD

risk-reduction benefit is likely to be lower in primary prevention without diabetes, few patients should be considered for additional therapies at this time beyond a maximally tolerated intensity of statin. The 2013 guidelines also recommended consideration of statin therapy for patients with 5% to <7.5% 10-year ASCVD risk, in the context of a clinician-patient discussion and consideration of other factors. Given the marginal additional benefit that would be anticipated for this lower-risk group, the expert consensus writing committee does not recommend routine use of non-statin therapy for these patients.

Primary prevention patients with 10-year ASCVD risk  $\geq 7.5\%$  without diabetes but with high-risk markers may be considered for the addition of non-statin therapy. The committee identified several high-risk markers that may be informative, including: 10-year ASCVD risk  $\geq 20\%$ ; primary LDL-C  $\geq 160$  mg/dL at baseline; other major ASCVD risk factor(s) that are poorly controlled; family history of premature ASCVD with or without elevated Lp(a); evidence of accelerated subclinical atherosclerosis (e.g., coronary artery calcification); elevated hs-CRP; and other risk-modifying conditions, such as CKD, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), and chronic inflammatory disorders. If a patient without high-risk markers has a 30% to <50% reduction on a moderate-intensity statin (and may consider LDL-C <100 mg/dL or non-HDL-C <130 mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue the statin therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If a patient has a less-than-anticipated response, with <30% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), or has  $\geq 1$  high-risk markers, additional clinical approaches are warranted. First, the clinician and patient should address statin adherence by assessing the number of missed statin doses per month and evaluating any barriers to adherence. Patients unable to tolerate even a moderate-intensity statin should be evaluated for statin intolerance and considered for referral to a lipid specialist. The clinician and patient should attempt to intensify lifestyle modification and soluble dietary fibers; phytosterols may be considered as part of this approach. Other major ASCVD risk factors, including tobacco use and elevated blood pressure, should be addressed and controlled as well. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy, with a 30% to <50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C <100 mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If, after these interventions, the patient still has <30% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), the patient and clinician should increase the statin dose to a high-intensity statin (if this has

not already been done), especially if high-risk markers are present. If the patient has now achieved the anticipated response to therapy, with  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in LDL-C (and may consider LDL-C <100 mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

If escalation to high-intensity statin (or initial high-intensity statin therapy) does not result in >50% reduction in LDL-C (and may consider if LDL-C remains  $\geq 100$  mg/dL) and if high-risk markers are present, the clinician and patient should enter into a discussion focused on shared decision making regarding the addition of a non-statin medication to their regimen (Table 5). If a decision is made to pursue no additional medication at this point, it is reasonable to continue current therapy and continue to monitor adherence to medications and lifestyle, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

For primary prevention patients with high-risk markers who have achieved less-than-anticipated response to maximally tolerated statin therapy with <50% LDL-C reduction (and may consider LDL-C  $\geq 100$  mg/dL or non-HDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL), ezetimibe may be considered as a potential additional agent. A BAS should only be considered if the patient is ezetimibe intolerant and has a triglyceride level <300 mg/dL. PCSK9 inhibitors should not be considered in this patient population at this time given the lack of safety and efficacy data. SPIRE-2 included approximately 18.5% high-risk primary prevention patients and demonstrated a reduction in major cardiovascular events in the overall population with the addition of bococizumab to maximally tolerated statin therapy (3). However, due to the short duration of follow-up (12 months) and the small numbers of events, the expert consensus writing committee determined that the evidence is not currently compelling enough to change recommendations for the use of other PCSK9 inhibitors in primary prevention patients with baseline LDL-C 70 to 189 mg/dL. If ezetimibe or a BAS is prescribed, clinicians should continue maximally tolerated statin and continue to monitor for adherence to medications and lifestyle, side effects, and ongoing LDL-C response to therapy.

### Special Populations

Patients with symptomatic heart failure, those on maintenance hemodialysis for end-stage renal disease, and those with planned or current pregnancy require individualized care.

**Patients with symptomatic heart failure.** Existing data regarding the use of statins in patients with symptomatic heart failure are equivocal because such patients have been largely excluded from RCTs. The CORONA (Controlled Rosuvastatin Multinational Trial in Heart Failure) and GISSI-HF (Gruppo Italiano per lo Studio della

Sopravvivenza nell'Infarto Miocardico Heart Failure) trials directly addressed the use of statins in patients with symptomatic heart failure and reduced left ventricular ejection fraction (42,43). The CORONA trial randomized 5,011 patients aged 60 years or older with ischemic etiology of heart failure and an ejection fraction  $\leq 40\%$  and New York Heart Association (NYHA) functional class II to IV symptoms to 10 mg of rosuvastatin versus placebo (42,44). The GISSI-HF trial randomized 4,574 patients aged  $\geq 18$  years with heart failure of ischemic and non-ischemic etiology with ejection fraction  $\leq 40\%$  (or  $>40\%$  if hospitalized within the past year) also to 10 mg of rosuvastatin versus placebo (44). Neither the CORONA nor the GISSI-HF trial demonstrated significant reductions in primary endpoints or major secondary endpoints. Both trials were notable for the very high all-cause mortality rates experienced by study participants regardless of randomization status, suggesting very high competing risks; however, a recent individual-level pooled data meta-analysis of these trials, which also accounted for the competing risks of mortality, demonstrated a significant 19% reduction in MI rates among patients with ischemic etiology of heart failure (45). Thus, the expert consensus writing committee judges that it is reasonable to consider use of statins in patients with symptomatic heart failure due to ischemic etiology who, in the clinician's judgment, have reasonable expectation of surviving long enough to achieve benefit from the statin therapy (i.e., 3 to 5 years or more). No data exist examining the use of non-statin therapies in heart failure patients, and heart failure is an exclusion criterion in recent PCSK9 inhibitor trials.

In light of the aforementioned considerations, the approach to patients with ASCVD and NYHA functional class II to III heart failure due to ischemic heart disease should generally follow the algorithm for patients with ASCVD and comorbidities, with the exception that use of a PCSK9 inhibitor is not recommended at this time (Figure 2B). Decisions about the use of other non-statin agents in these patients is a matter of clinical judgment after consideration of the potential net clinical benefit in the context of the patient's projected longevity and other comorbidities.

**Patients on maintenance hemodialysis.** The issues surrounding the use of statins and non-statin therapies in patients on maintenance dialysis parallel those for patients with symptomatic heart failure. The SHARP (Study of Heart and Renal Protection) trial (46) randomized patients with CKD (3,023 on dialysis) to simvastatin 20 mg plus ezetimibe 10 mg versus matching placebo. Whereas simvastatin-ezetimibe combination therapy was associated with a significant 17% reduction in the trial primary endpoint of major atherosclerotic events overall, the reduction was smaller and non-significant in dialysis

patients, and particularly hemodialysis patients (although power was limited to detect benefit in this smaller subgroup). The all-cause mortality rate was again notably high in this patient population (45). The effect of simvastatin-ezetimibe remained significant in the subgroup with CKD not on dialysis. The AURORA (A Study to Evaluate the Use of Rosuvastatin in Subjects on Regular Hemodialysis: An Assessment of Survival and Cardiovascular Events) trial of patients aged 50 to 80 years with end-stage renal disease receiving maintenance hemodialysis compared rosuvastatin 10 mg versus placebo and found no significant benefit in any vascular outcomes in the setting of extremely high all-cause mortality rates in these patients (47).

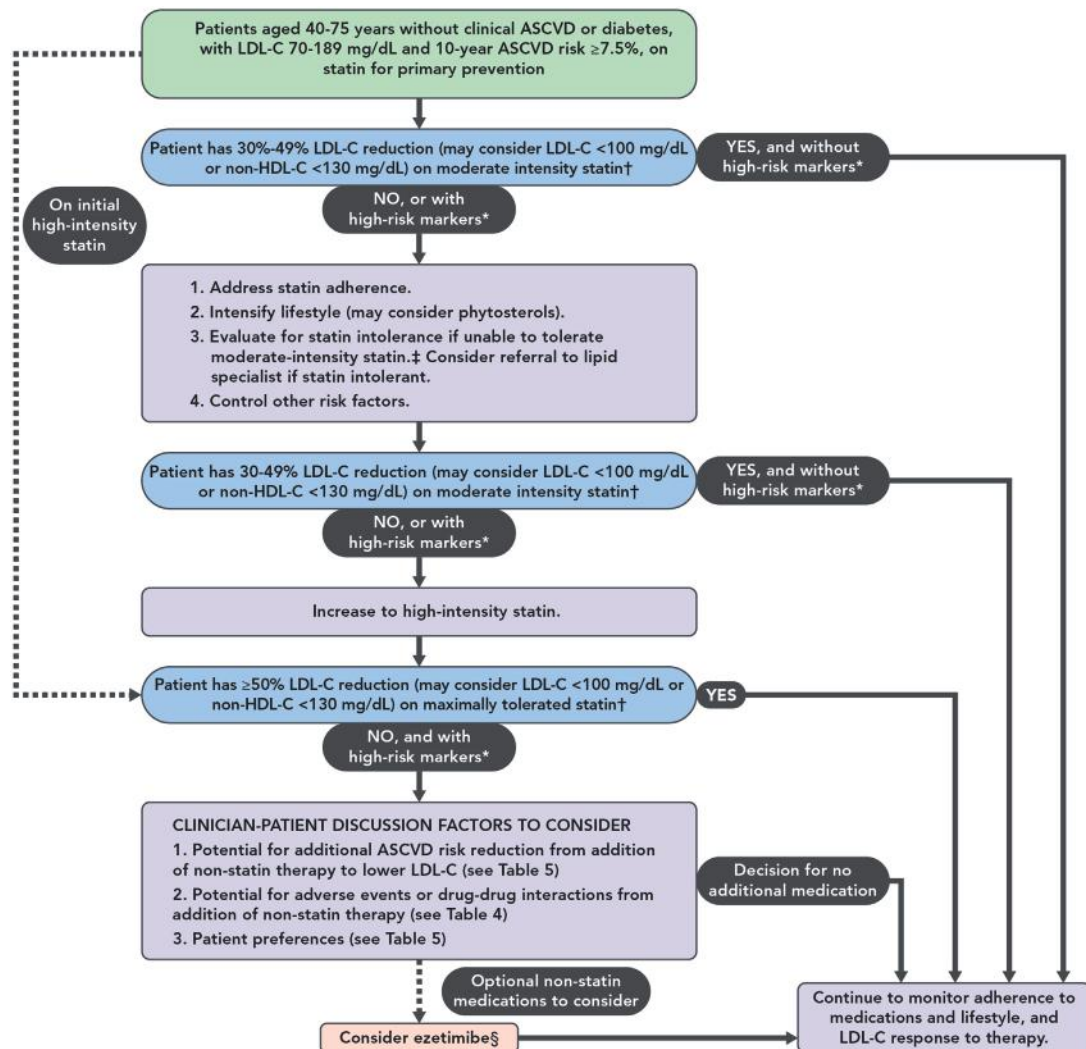
The expert consensus committee, therefore, includes patients with CKD not on dialysis as a higher-risk subset in patients with ASCVD who may merit consideration for more intensive LDL-C lowering with use of a non-statin medication (Figure 2B). Similarly, patients with CKD not on dialysis but without ASCVD, on statins for primary prevention, are considered to be at higher risk than the general population (Figures 4 and 5).

In light of the aforementioned considerations, the approach to patients with ASCVD on maintenance dialysis, and particularly hemodialysis, should be individualized. Decisions about the use of statins and other non-statin agents in these patients is a matter of clinical judgment after consideration of the potential net clinical benefit in the context of the patient's projected longevity and other comorbidities. For patients in whom statin therapy and possibly addition of non-statin therapies is judged to be of potential net benefit, the algorithms in Figure 2B may apply, with the exception of the use of a PCSK9 inhibitor, which is not recommended at this time.

**Patients considering pregnancy (or already pregnant).**

Statins should only be used in premenopausal women who are using effective contraception and are not nursing. Premenopausal women with ASCVD or baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL often have underlying genetic lipid disorders, particularly FH, and/or multiple poorly controlled risk factors. Women who are currently on lipid-lowering drugs should be advised to discontinue pharmacologic therapy, with the exception of BAS, generally at least 1 month and preferably 3 months before attempted conception, or immediately if the patient is already pregnant (22). Patients who have been prescribed lipid-lowering therapy for clinical ASCVD or baseline LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL who become pregnant should be counseled on intensive lifestyle modifications; referral to a lipid specialist and RDN is strongly recommended. Patients on lipid-lowering therapy in the setting of diabetes or elevated 10-year ASCVD risk who desire to become pregnant or are already pregnant should have lipid therapy discontinued, be monitored for significant elevations in

**FIGURE 5** Patients Aged 40-75 years without Clinical ASCVD or Diabetes, with LDL-C 70-189 mg/dL and 10-Year ASCVD Risk  $\geq 7.5\%$ , on Statin for Primary Prevention



Abbreviations: ASCVD = atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, BAS = bile acid sequestrant, HDL-C = high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, LDL-C = low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, RDN = registered dietitian nutritionist.

\* High-risk markers include 10-year ASCVD risk  $\geq 20\%$ , primary LDL-C  $\geq 160$  mg/dL at baseline; poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factor; family history of premature ASCVD with or without elevated Lp(a); evidence of accelerated subclinical atherosclerosis (e.g., coronary artery calcification); elevated hs-CRP; or other risk-modifying conditions, such as chronic kidney disease, HIV, and chronic inflammatory disorders.

†The Expert Panel emphasizes that these are not firm triggers for adding medication, but they are factors that may be considered within the broader context of an individual patient's clinical situation.

‡See section on strategy for assessment and management of statin intolerance.

§May consider BAS as optional alternative agent if ezetimibe intolerant and triglycerides  $<300$  mg/dL.

LDL-C during pregnancy (recognizing that a progressive rise in both LDL-C and triglycerides is physiologic during pregnancy), and be counseled on lifestyle modifications (13). Such patients may be managed with BAS. Of note, pregnant patients who are managed with BAS should be monitored for vitamin K deficiency. Statin and ezetimibe therapy may be resumed after completion of breastfeeding (22).

There are concerns for fetal harm associated with statins, although recent large observational studies have not demonstrated evidence of harm with statin use (48). Lomitapide is not recommended in patients with HoFH during pregnancy due to concerns for fetal harm. There are no available safety and efficacy data for the use of PCSK9 inhibitors or mipomersen in pregnancy. The writing committee suggests consideration of LDL

apheresis in pregnant patients with HoFH and patients with severe HeFH and LDL-C  $\geq 300$  mg/dL despite lifestyle therapy. In FH patients with ASCVD and pregnancy, LDL apheresis may be considered when LDL-C  $\geq 190$  mg/dL.

**Other special populations.** Detailed recommendations for other special populations of patients with specific comorbidities or conditions are beyond the scope of this document, and few if any data exist to guide such recommendations. In such situations, the committee therefore urges the particular need for thoughtful clinician-patient discussion of the potential benefits and harms of statin and non-statin therapies, and of patient preferences, in the context of the individual patient's clinical situation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Since the publication of the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guidelines, RCTs evaluating the safety and efficacy of non-statin therapies (including large trials of ezetimibe; extended-release niacin with laropiprant; and the PCSK9 inhibitors, evolocumab and alirocumab) added to statins in higher-risk patients have provided important

information regarding the potential benefits and harms of these agents in ASCVD risk reduction when used in combination with evidence-based statin therapy. This has resulted in gaps in expert guidance regarding the role of available non-statin therapies. This ECDP addresses current gaps in care for LDL-C lowering to reduce ASCVD risk and provides recommendations that build on the evidence base established by the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guideline. The algorithms endorse the 4 evidence-based statin benefit groups identified in the 2013 ACC/AHA cholesterol guidelines and assume that the patient is currently taking or has attempted to take a statin, given that this is the most effective initial therapy. Recommendations attempt to provide practical guidance for clinicians and patients regarding the use of non-statin therapies to further reduce ASCVD risk in situations not covered by the guideline until such time as the scientific evidence base expands and cardiovascular outcomes trials are completed with new agents for ASCVD risk reduction.

## 7. TABLES

TABLE 2

**Four Statin Benefit Groups and Major Recommendations From the 2013 ACC/AHA Guideline on the Treatment of Blood Cholesterol to Reduce Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Risk in Adults (9)**

Patient Group	Major Recommendations
1. <b>Adults aged <math>\geq 21</math> years with clinical ASCVD</b> (including history of or current ACS, MI, stable or unstable angina, coronary or other arterial revascularization, stroke, TIA, or PAD presumed to be of atherosclerotic origin)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For patients age <math>\leq 75</math> years, high-intensity statin (or moderate-intensity statin if not a candidate for high-intensity statin due to safety concerns)</li> <li>For patients age <math>&gt; 75</math> years, moderate-intensity statin</li> </ol>
2. <b>Adults aged <math>\geq 21</math> years with LDL-C <math>\geq 190</math> mg/dL</b> (not due to modifiable secondary causes)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-intensity statin therapy to achieve <math>\geq 50\%</math> reduction in LDL-C statin (or moderate-intensity statin if not a candidate for high-intensity statin due to safety concerns)</li> <li>May consider combining statin and non-statin therapy to further reduce LDL-C</li> <li>Cascade screening of close biological relatives should be performed to identify others with the disease who would benefit from treatment.</li> </ol>
3. <b>Adults aged 40–75 years without ASCVD but with diabetes and with LDL-C 70–189 mg/dL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate-intensity statin</li> <li>If 10-year ASCVD risk <math>\geq 7.5\%</math>, consider high-intensity statin.</li> </ol>
4. <b>Adults aged 40–75 years without ASCVD or diabetes, and with LDL-C 70–189 mg/dL and an estimated 10-year risk for ASCVD of <math>\geq 7.5\%</math></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimate 10-year ASCVD risk using Pooled Cohort Equations (10): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If <math>\geq 7.5\%</math>, moderate- or high-intensity statin;</li> <li>If <math>\geq 5</math> to <math>&lt; 7.5\%</math>, consider moderate-intensity statin.</li> </ol> </li> <li>In selected individuals with 10-year ASCVD risk <math>&lt; 5\%</math>, or age <math>&lt; 40</math> or <math>&gt; 75</math> years, individualize decisions based on presence of other high-risk features.*</li> <li>Before initiation of statin therapy for primary prevention, it is reasonable for clinicians and patients to engage in a discussion that considers the potential for ASCVD risk-reduction benefits and for adverse effects and drug-drug interactions, as well as patient preferences for treatment.</li> </ol>

\*The 2013 ACC/AHA guideline recommends consideration of other ASCVD risk factors (LDL-C  $\geq 160$  mg/dL, family history of premature ASCVD, hs-CRP  $\geq 2.0$  mg/L, CAC score  $\geq 300$  Agatston units, ABI  $< 0.9$ , and high lifetime ASCVD risk).

ABI indicates ankle-brachial index; ACC, American College of Cardiology; AHA, American Heart Association; ASCVD, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease; CAC, coronary artery calcification; hs-CRP, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein; and LDL-C, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol; PAD, peripheral arterial disease; TIA, transient ischemic attack.



**TABLE 3** Examples of High-, Moderate-, and Low-Intensity Statin Therapy (Adapted From 2013 ACC/AHA Guideline on the Treatment of Blood Cholesterol to Reduce Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Risk in Adults)

High-Intensity Statin Therapy	Moderate-Intensity Statin Therapy	Low-Intensity Statin Therapy
Daily dose lowers LDL-C, on average, by approximately $\geq 50\%$ .	Daily dose lowers LDL-C, on average, by approximately 30%– $<50\%$ .	Daily dose lowers LDL-C, on average, by $<30\%$ .
<b>Atorvastatin 40–80 mg</b> <b>Rosuvastatin 20–40 mg</b>	<b>Atorvastatin 10–20 mg</b> <b>Fluvastatin 40 mg twice daily</b> Fluvastatin XL 80 mg <b>Lovastatin 40 mg</b> Pitavastatin 2–4 mg <b>Pravastatin 40–80 mg</b> <b>Rosuvastatin 5–10 mg</b> <b>Simvastatin 20–40 mg</b>	Fluvastatin 20–40 mg <b>Lovastatin 20 mg</b> Pitavastatin 1 mg Pravastatin 10–20 mg Simvastatin 10 mg

**Bold face type** indicates statins and doses that were evaluated in RCTs included in the 2013 ACC/AHA guideline.

ACC indicates American College of Cardiology; AHA, American Heart Association; LDL-C, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol; and RCT, randomized controlled trial.

**TABLE 4** Strategies and Non-Statin Agents Considered for Management of LDL-Related ASCVD Risk

Strategy/Agent	Comments
<b>Referral to lipid specialist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider referring patients with baseline LDL-C <math>\geq 190</math> mg/dL, very high risk for ASCVD, complex lipid disorders, statin intolerance or multiple lipid medication intolerances, or familial hypercholesterolemia for consultation with a lipid specialist for advanced management.</li> <li><b>Considerations in referring:</b> Lipid specialists may not be easily available in some rural or remote locations.</li> </ul>
<b>Ezetimibe (49)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mechanism of action:</b> Inhibits Niemann-Pick C1 like 1 (NPC1L1) protein; reduces cholesterol absorption in small intestine.</li> <li><b>FDA-approved indication(s):</b> As adjunct to diet to: 1) <math>\downarrow</math> TC, LDL-C, Apo B, non-HDL-C in patients with primary hyperlipidemia, alone or in combination with a statin; 2) <math>\downarrow</math> TC, LDL-C, Apo B, non-HDL-C in patients with mixed hyperlipidemia in combination with fenofibrate; 3) <math>\downarrow</math> TC, LDL-C with HoFH, in combination with atorvastatin or simvastatin; 4) <math>\downarrow</math> sitosterol and campesterol in patients with homozygous sitosterolemia (phytosterolemia).</li> <li><b>Dose:</b> 10 mg PO daily, with or without food. Take either <math>\geq 2</math> hours before or <math>\geq 4</math> hours after BAS if used in combination.</li> <li><b>Mean % reduction in LDL-C (per PI):</b> Monotherapy—18%; combination therapy with statin (incremental reduction)—25%</li> <li><b>Adverse effects:</b> Monotherapy—upper respiratory tract infection, diarrhea, arthralgia, sinusitis, pain in extremity; combination with statin—nasopharyngitis, myalgia, upper respiratory tract infection, arthralgia, diarrhea.</li> <li><b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> cyclosporine, fibrates, BAS</li> <li><b>CV outcomes trials:</b> IMPROVE-IT (6) (The addition of ezetimibe to moderate-intensity statin in patients with recent ACS resulted in incremental lowering of LDL-C and reduced primary composite endpoint of CV death, nonfatal MI, UA requiring re-hospitalization, coronary revascularization [<math>\geq 30</math> days after randomization], or nonfatal stroke. The median follow-up was 6 years.); SHARP (46) (Simvastatin plus ezetimibe reduced LDL-C and reduced primary endpoint of first major ASCVD event [nonfatal MI or CHD death, non-hemorrhagic stroke, or any arterial revascularization procedure] compared to placebo over a median f/u of 4.9 years).</li> <li><b>Prescribing considerations:</b> Generally well tolerated. Generic available.</li> </ul>
<b>PCSK9 inhibitors (50,51)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mechanism of action:</b> Human monoclonal antibody to PCSK9. Binds to PCSK9 and increases the number of LDL receptors available to clear circulating LDL.</li> <li><b>FDA-approved indication(s):</b> Alirocumab and evolocumab: Adjunct to diet and maximally tolerated statin therapy to treat adults with HeFH or clinical ASCVD who need more LDL-C reduction. Evolocumab: Adjunct to diet and other LDL-lowering therapies (e.g., statins, ezetimibe, LDL apheresis) in patients with HoFH who need more LDL-C reduction.</li> <li><b>Dose and route of administration:</b> Alirocumab—initiate 75 mg subcutaneously (SQ) every 2 weeks. If more LDL reduction needed, may <math>\uparrow</math> dose to 150 mg every 2 weeks. Alternative starting dose is 300 mg SQ every 4 weeks. Evolocumab—in primary hypercholesterolemia with established clinical ASCVD or HeFH, give 140 mg SQ every 2 weeks or 420 mg SQ once monthly in abdomen, thigh, or upper arm. In HoFH, give 420 mg SQ once monthly. To administer 420 mg, give 3 (140 mg) injections consecutively within 30 minutes.</li> <li><b>Mean % LDL-C reduction (per PI):</b> Alirocumab—when added to maximally tolerated statin therapy, alirocumab 75 mg and 150 SQ every 2 weeks <math>\downarrow</math> LDL-C by an additional 45% and 58%, respectively. When added to maximally tolerated statin therapy evolocumab 140 mg every 2 weeks and 420 mg SQ every 4 weeks, <math>\downarrow</math> LDL-C by an additional 64% and 58%, respectively.</li> <li><b>Adverse effects:</b> Alirocumab—nasopharyngitis, injection site reactions, influenza. Evolocumab—nasopharyngitis, upper respiratory tract infection, influenza, back pain, and injection site reactions. No evidence of increase in cognitive adverse effects observed in FOURIER or EBBINGHAUS (7,52).</li> <li><b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> No clinically significant drug-drug interactions identified for alirocumab or evolocumab.</li> <li><b>CV outcomes trials:</b> Alirocumab—ODYSSEY Outcomes (4) (18,600 post-ACS [4–52 weeks] patients on evidence-based statin therapy; Primary endpoint is CHD death, MI, ischemic stroke, or hospitalization for UA. Estimated study completion is December 2017). Evolocumab—FOURIER (7) (27,564 patients with prior MI, stroke, or PAD on atorvastatin <math>\geq 20</math> mg or equivalent; Demonstrated that addition of evolocumab reduced the primary endpoint of CV death, MI, stroke, revascularization or hospitalization for UA). Bococizumab—SPIRE-1 and -2 (2) (27,438 patients at high risk of CV event with LDL-C 70–99 mg/dL [SPIRE-1] or <math>\geq 100</math> mg/dL [SPIRE-2] on lipid-lowering therapy; Studies terminated by sponsor at median follow-up 10 months). There was no benefit in the combined analysis with respect to the primary composite endpoint of CV death, MI, stroke, or urgent revascularization.</li> <li><b>Considerations in prescribing:</b> Cost, SQ administration, robust LDL-C reduction, CV outcomes trials not completed for alirocumab, burdensome prior authorization process</li> </ul>

Continued on the next page

**TABLE 4** Continued

Strategy/Agent	Comments
<b>Bile acid sequestrants</b> (53-56)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Mechanism of action:</b> Non-absorbed, lipid-lowering polymer that binds bile acids in intestine and impedes their reabsorption. As the bile acid pool ↓, the hepatic enzyme, cholesterol 7-<math>\alpha</math>-hydroxylase, is upregulated, which ↑ conversion of cholesterol to bile acids. This causes ↑ demand for cholesterol in the liver cells, resulting in the dual effect of increasing transcription and activity of the cholesterol biosynthetic enzyme, HMG-CoA reductase, and ↑ the number of hepatic LDL receptors. These compensatory effects result in ↑ clearance of LDL-C from the blood, in turn resulting in ↓ serum LDL-C levels. Serum TG levels may ↑ or remain unchanged.</li> <li>■ <b>FDA-approved indication(s):</b> <b>Colesevelam:</b> 1) Adults, as adjunct to diet and exercise, to ↓ LDL-C with primary hyperlipidemia: monotherapy or in combination with statin; 2) Adults, as adjunct to diet and exercise, to improve glycemic control with type 2 diabetes mellitus; 3) Boys and post-menarchal girls, 10 to 17 years of age, with HeFH after failing an adequate trial of diet therapy (e.g., LDL-C remains <math>\geq</math>190 mg/dL; or LDL-C remains <math>\geq</math> 160 mg/dL and there is a positive family history of premature CVD or <math>\geq</math>2 other CVD risk factors are present in the pediatric patient) to ↓ LDL-C levels: As monotherapy or in combination with statin. <b>Cholestyramine, colestid:</b> As adjunct to diet to ↓ LDL-C with primary hyperlipidemia.</li> <li>■ <b>Dose and route of administration:</b> <b>1) Colesevelam:</b> Tablets: 6 tablets PO once daily or 3 tablets PO twice daily; take tablets with a meal and liquid. Suspension: one 3.75-gram packet PO daily, or one 1.875-gram packet PO twice daily; mixed powder with 4-8 ounces of water, fruit juice, or soft drink; take with meal. 3.75 g is equivalent to 6 tablets. 1.875 g is equivalent to 3 tablets; <b>2) Cholestyramine:</b> 8-16 g/day orally divided into 2 doses; <b>3) Colestipol:</b> 2-16 g/day orally given once or in divided doses.</li> <li>■ <b>Mean % LDL reduction (per PI):</b> <b>Colesevelam:</b> Monotherapy—15% (6 tablets daily); combination with low- to moderate-intensity statin—additional 10% to 16% reduction in LDL-C (data from simvastatin 10 mg, atorvastatin 10 mg). <b>Cholestyramine:</b> Monotherapy—10.4% vs placebo. <b>Colestipol:</b> not provided in PI. In dose-ranging RCT with monotherapy, doses of 5 g, 10 g, and 15 g resulted in 16.3%, 22.8%, and 27.2% reduction in LDL-C, respectively (57)</li> <li>■ <b>Adverse effects:</b> Constipation, dyspepsia, and nausea. Post-marketing reports with colesevelam include ↑ seizure activity or ↓ phenytoin levels in patients receiving phenytoin, ↓ INR in patients receiving warfarin, ↑ TSH in patients receiving thyroid hormone replacement therapy, bowel obstruction, dysphagia, esophageal obstruction, fecal impaction, hypertriglyceridemia, pancreatitis, and increased transaminases</li> <li>■ <b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> Drugs with potential interaction should be taken at least 1 hour before or 4 hours after BAS to avoid impeding their absorption.</li> <li>■ <b>CV outcomes trials:</b> LRC-CPPT (3,806 asymptomatic middle-aged men with primary hypercholesterolemia randomized to cholestyramine resin and versus placebo for an average of 7.4 years). Cholestyramine group experienced a 19% reduction in risk (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>) of the primary endpoint—definite CHD death and/or definite nonfatal MI. The effects of colesevelam and colestipol on cardiovascular morbidity and mortality have not been determined.</li> <li>■ <b>Considerations in prescribing:</b> Pill burden; inconvenience in preparation of oral suspension preparations; GI side effects; exacerbation of hypertriglyceridemia; orally administered, colesevelam lowers HbA1c 0.5% in diabetes; CV outcomes data not available.</li> </ul>
<b>Phytosterols</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Mechanism of action:</b> Not fully elucidated, but in part related to displacement of cholesterol from the micellar phase. Phytosterols ↓ cholesterol content of micelles and hence ↓ its transport towards the intestinal brush border membrane. May also interfere with transporter-mediated processes of cholesterol uptake via NPC1L1 protein and ABCG5 and ABCG8 transporters.</li> <li>■ <b>FDA-approved claims:</b> "For plant sterol esters: (i) Foods containing at least 0.65 g per serving of plant sterol esters, eaten twice a day with meals for a daily total intake of at least 1.3 g, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. For plant stanol esters: (i) Foods containing at least 1.7 g per serving of plant stanol esters, eaten twice a day with meals for a total daily intake of at least 3.4 g, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease."</li> <li>■ <b>Dose and route of administration:</b> 1-3 g PO per day consumed with meals either once daily or in divided doses.</li> <li>■ <b>Mean % LDL-C reduction:</b> Consumption of 2 g/day of phytosterols ↓ LDL-C by 5%-15%. LDL-C ↓ plateaus at doses above ~3 g/day.</li> <li>■ <b>Adverse effects:</b> Phytosterol esters have "generally recognized as safe" (GRAS) status in the U.S. Potential safety concern regarding phytosterol consumption in patients with phytosterolemia. Side effects may include mild bloating, diarrhea, or constipation.</li> <li>■ <b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> BAS administration should be separated from phytosterol use by 2-4 hours to avoid binding of the latter in the gut.</li> <li>■ <b>CV outcomes trials:</b> The effect of phytosterols on cardiovascular morbidity and mortality as not been determined.</li> <li>■ <b>Considerations in prescribing:</b> Generally well tolerated; modest ↓ in LDL-C; CV outcomes data not available.</li> </ul>
<b>Soluble/viscous fiber</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Mechanism of action:</b> Trapping of cholesterol and bile acids in the small intestine, resulting in ↓ absorption/reabsorption.</li> <li>■ <b>FDA-approved claims:</b> "Soluble fiber as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease."</li> <li>■ <b>Dose and route of administration:</b> Food source must be low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and include 1 or more of the following whole oat or barley foods: 1) oat bran, 2) rolled oats, 3) whole oat flour, 4) whole grain barley or dry milled barley.</li> <li>■ <b>Mean % LDL-D reduction:</b> With intake of 3.0-12.4 g/day, mean TC and LDL-C levels were ↓ relative to control by 9.7 and 11.6 mg/dL, respectively.</li> <li>■ <b>Adverse effects:</b> Few safety concerns. If viscous fiber supplements such as fiber laxatives are used, it is critical to consume adequate fluid as directed on the product label to avoid intestinal blockage (a rare occurrence).</li> <li>■ <b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> Reduced carotenoid absorption. Regular consumption of fruits and vegetables should help to counteract this potential effect.</li> <li>■ <b>CV outcomes trials:</b> Despite evidence of LDL-C lowering, the effect of soluble/viscous fiber on cardiovascular morbidity and mortality has not been demonstrated in RCTs.</li> <li>■ <b>Considerations in prescribing:</b> GI tolerability</li> </ul>

Continued on the next page

**TABLE 4** Continued

Strategy/Agent	Comments
<b>Mipomersen (58)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Mechanism of action:</b> An antisense oligonucleotide targeted to human mRNA for apo B-100, the principal apolipoprotein of LDL and its metabolic precursor, VLDL. Mipomersen is complementary to the coding region of the mRNA for apo B-100, and binds by Watson and Crick base pairing. The hybridization of mipomersen to the cognate mRNA results in RNase H-mediated degradation of the cognate mRNA, thus inhibiting translation of the apo B-100 protein.</li> <li>■ <b>FDA-approved indication(s):</b> As an adjunct to lipid-lowering medications and diet, ↓ LDL-C, apo B, TC, and non-HDL-C in patients with HoFH. The safety and effectiveness of mipomersen have not been established in patients with hypercholesterolemia who do not have HoFH. The use of mipomersen as an adjunct to LDL apheresis is not recommended.</li> <li>■ <b>Dose and route of administration:</b> 200 mg SQ once weekly</li> <li>■ <b>Mean % LDL-C reduction (per PI):</b> Response to addition of mipomersen to maximally tolerated lipid-lowering medication in patients with HoFH—25%.</li> <li>■ <b>Adverse effects:</b> Injection site reactions, flu-like symptoms, nausea, headache and elevations in serum transaminases, specifically ALT. Increases hepatic fat (hepatic steatosis) with or without concomitant increases in transaminases. May be a risk factor for progressive liver disease, including steatohepatitis and cirrhosis. Because of the risk of hepatotoxicity, mipomersen is available only through REMS program.</li> <li>■ <b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> No clinically relevant pharmacokinetic interactions were reported between mipomersen and warfarin, simvastatin, or ezetimibe.</li> <li>■ <b>CV outcomes trials:</b> The effect of mipomersen on cardiovascular morbidity and mortality has not been determined.</li> <li>■ <b>Considerations in prescribing:</b> Cost, SQ administration, requires monitoring of transaminase levels, long-term consequences of hepatic steatosis unknown, prescriber training, REMS program</li> </ul>
<b>Lomitapide (59)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Mechanism of action:</b> Directly binds and inhibits microsomal triglyceride transfer protein (MTP), which resides in the lumen of the endoplasmic reticulum, thereby preventing the assembly of apo B-containing lipoproteins in enterocytes and hepatocytes. This inhibits the synthesis of chylomicrons and VLDL and leads to ↓ LDL-C.</li> <li>■ <b>FDA-approved indications:</b> As an adjunct to a low-fat diet and other lipid-lowering treatments, including LDL apheresis where available, to ↓ LDL-C, TC, apo B, and non-HDL-C in patients with HoFH.</li> <li>■ <b>Dose and route of administration:</b> Initiate 5 mg PO once daily. Titrate dose based on acceptable safety/tolerability: increase to 10 mg daily after at least 2 weeks and then, at a minimum of 4-week intervals, to 20 mg, 40 mg, and up to maximum recommended dose of 60 mg daily.</li> <li>■ <b>Mean % LDL reduction (per PI):</b> Mean and median percent changes in LDL-C from baseline when added to baseline lipid-lowering therapy were –40% and –50%, respectively.</li> <li>■ <b>Adverse effects:</b> Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, dyspepsia, and abdominal pain. Increases hepatic fat (hepatic steatosis) with or without concomitant increases in transaminases. Hepatic steatosis associated with lomitapide may be a risk factor for progressive liver disease, including steatohepatitis and cirrhosis.</li> <li>■ <b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> CYP3A4 inhibitors increase exposure to lomitapide. Strong and moderate CYP3A4 inhibitors are contraindicated with lomitapide. Avoid grapefruit juice. Do not exceed 30 mg daily of lomitapide when used concomitantly with weak CYP3A4 inhibitors, including atorvastatin and oral contraceptives. Increases plasma concentrations of warfarin; monitor INR regularly, especially with lomitapide dose adjustment. Increased systemic exposure to simvastatin and lovastatin exposure with lomitapide. Limit statin dose when co-administered due to myopathy risk. Consider dose reduction of P-gp substrate because of possible increased absorption with lomitapide. Separate lomitapide dosing with BAS by at least 4 hours. Because of the risk of hepatotoxicity, lomitapide available only through REMS program.</li> <li>■ <b>CV outcomes trials:</b> The effect of lomitapide on cardiovascular morbidity and mortality has not been determined.</li> <li>■ <b>Considerations in prescribing:</b> Cost, oral administration, requires strict adherence to low-fat diet and gradual dose escalation to reduce GI side effects, requires monitoring of transaminase levels, long-term consequences of hepatic steatosis unknown, prescriber training, REMS program</li> </ul>
<b>LDL apheresis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Mechanism of action:</b> Selectively removes apo B-containing lipoproteins, producing an acute reduction in LDL-C.</li> <li>■ <b>FDA approved indication:</b> Patients with FH unresponsive to pharmacologic and dietary management who are either functional homozygotes with a LDL-C &gt;500 mg/dL, functional heterozygotes with no known cardiovascular disease but a LDL-C &gt;300 mg/dL, or functional heterozygotes with known cardiovascular disease and LDL-C &gt;200 mg/dL.</li> <li>■ <b>Dose and route of administration:</b> Extracorporeal technique performed weekly or biweekly.</li> <li>■ <b>Mean % LDL-C reduction:</b> With weekly or biweekly treatment, average LDL-C can ↓ to ~50%–60% of the original levels. LDL-C increases after each apheresis session but does not return to the original level.</li> <li>■ <b>Adverse effects:</b> Problems with venous access; transient hypotension, fatigue; bleeding; hypocalcemia; iron deficiency due to regular phlebotomy for diagnostic purposes; heparin allergy; and bradykinin syndrome (especially with ACEI).</li> <li>■ <b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> ACEI should not be used with dextran sulfate method owing to risk of bradykinin syndrome.</li> <li>■ <b>CV outcomes trials:</b> Limited due to ethical considerations in RCTs of very high-risk patients with HoFH, but it is reasonable to assume reductions in CVD events are proportional to the degree of LDL cholesterol lowering.</li> <li>■ <b>Considerations in prescribing:</b> Cost, extracorporeal technique, inconvenient, locations not readily available in some regions, time-consuming, robust reduction in LDL-C.</li> </ul>

ASCVD indicates atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease; BAS, bile acid sequestrant; CHD, coronary heart disease; CV, cardiovascular; GI, gastrointestinal; HDL-C, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol; HeFH, heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia; HoFH, homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia; INR, international normalized ratio; LDL-C, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol; MI, myocardial infarction; PAD, peripheral arterial disease; PCSK9, proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9; PI, prescribing information; PO, by mouth; REMS, Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy; SQ, subcutaneous; TC, total cholesterol; TG, triglycerides; TSH, thyroid stimulating hormone; UA, unstable angina; and VLDL, very low density lipoprotein.

**TABLE 5 Factors to Consider in the Clinician-Patient Discussion**

<b>1. Potential for additional ASCVD risk reduction from addition of non-statin therapy to evidence-based statin therapy to lower LDL-cholesterol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Percentage LDL-C reduction achieved with evidence-based statin therapy (if &lt;50% and not on maximally tolerated statin, should increase statin first and reinforce lifestyle modifications)</li> <li>■ For patients with ASCVD, patient's baseline ASCVD risk on evidence-based statin therapy (with or without comorbidities)*</li> <li>■ For patients without ASCVD or baseline LDL-C <math>\geq 190</math> mg/dL, patient's baseline predicted 10-year ASCVD risk pre-statin and presence of high-risk markers†</li> <li>■ Available scientific evidence of ASCVD risk reduction (and magnitude of benefit) when non-statin therapy is added to evidence-based statin therapy‡</li> <li>■ Additional desired % LDL-C lowering beyond that achieved on evidence-based statin therapy§</li> <li>■ Mean percentage LDL-C lowering expected with proposed non-statin therapy when added to evidence-based statin therapy  </li> </ul>
<b>2. Potential for significant adverse events or drug-drug interactions from addition of non-statin therapy to evidence-based statin therapy for lowering LDL-cholesterol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ See Table 3.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Patient preferences and considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Patient's perception of benefit from addition of non-statin therapy</li> <li>■ Convenience (e.g., route and frequency of administration, pill burden, storage) of non-statin therapy</li> <li>■ Potential of non-statin therapy to jeopardize adherence to evidence-based therapies</li> <li>■ Cost of non-statin therapy</li> <li>■ Anticipated life expectancy, comorbidities, and impact of therapy on quality of life</li> </ul>

\*For example, in the Treating to New Targets trial, patients with CHD who received 10 mg of atorvastatin daily had a 5-year event rate of 10.9%, and those who received 80 mg of atorvastatin daily had a 5-year event rate of 8.7%. These numbers (and similar rates from other trials) may inform the number-needed-to-treat. Additional consideration of comorbidities and other poorly controlled or well-controlled risk factors will increase or decrease risk accordingly. Comorbidities are defined as diabetes, a recent (<3 months) ASCVD event, an ASCVD event while already taking a statin, poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factors, elevated Lp(a), CKD, symptomatic heart failure, maintenance hemodialysis, age  $\geq 65$  years, prior MI or non-hemorrhagic stroke, current daily cigarette smoking, symptomatic PAD, history of non-MI related coronary revascularization, residual coronary artery disease with  $\geq 40\%$  stenosis in  $\geq 2$  large vessels, HDL-C <40 mg/dL for men and <50 mg/dL for women, hs-CRP  $> 2$  mg/L, or metabolic syndrome.

†Use the Pooled Cohort Equations to estimate 10-year ASCVD risk. High-risk markers include 10-year ASCVD risk  $\geq 20\%$ , primary LDL-C  $\geq 160$  mg/dL at baseline; poorly controlled other major ASCVD risk factor(s); family history of premature ASCVD with or without elevated Lp(a); evidence of accelerated subclinical atherosclerosis (e.g., coronary artery calcification); elevated hs-CRP; and other risk-modifying conditions, such as CKD, HIV, and chronic inflammatory disorders.

‡Such evidence exists for ezetimibe from the IMPROVE-IT study, with a 6% relative/2% absolute risk reduction in a composite ASCVD endpoint over 7 years when added to a moderate-intensity statin. Short-term data (<18 months) from PCSK9 inhibitors alirocumab and evolocumab suggest more substantial ASCVD risk reduction. Data are lacking for addition of BAS to statins. Niacin preparations have been associated with no benefit and potential for significant harms when added to statin therapy.

§For example, patients on maximally tolerated statin with LDL-C of 130 mg/dL may receive more benefit from addition of a non-statin therapy than those with on-statin LDL-C of 80 mg/dL.

||For example, when added to statins, ezetimibe may lower LDL-C an additional 20-25% on average; PCSK9 inhibitors may lower LDL-C an additional 60% on average. For each 40 mg/dL reduction in LDL-C using safe and evidence-based therapies, there appears to be an approximate 20% relative risk reduction in ASCVD. This number, combined with the baseline absolute risk, may inform the number-needed-to-treat.

**TABLE 6 Familial Hypercholesterolemia Diagnostic Categories**

ICD-10 Category	Clinical Criteria	With Genetic Testing Performed
<b>Heterozygous FH</b>	LDL-C $\geq 160$ mg/dL (4 mmol/L) for children and $\geq 190$ mg/dL (5 mmol/L) for adults and with 1 first-degree relative similarly affected or with premature CAD or with positive genetic testing for a LDL-C raising gene defect (LDL receptor, apoB, or PCSK9)	Presence of 1 abnormal LDL-C raising gene defect (LDL receptor, apoB, or PCSK9) Diagnosed as heterozygous FH if LDL-C raising defect positive and LDL-C <160 mg/dL (4 mmol/L) Occasionally, heterozygotes will have LDL-C >400 mg/dL (10 mmol/L); they should be treated similarly to homozygotes Presence of both abnormal LDL-C raising gene defects (LDL receptor, apoB, or PCSK9) and LDL-C lowering gene variant(s) with LDL-C <160 mg/dL (4 mmol/L)
<b>Homozygous FH</b>	LDL-C $\geq 400$ mg/dL (10 mmol/L) and 1 or both parents having clinically diagnosed FH, positive genetic testing for a LDL-C raising gene defect (LDL receptor, apoB, or PCSK9) or autosomal-recessive FH If LDL-C >560 mg/dL (14 mmol/L) or LDL-C >400 mg/dL (10 mmol/L) with aortic valve disease or xanthomata at <20 years of age, homozygous FH highly likely	Presence of 2 identical (true homozygous FH) or nonidentical (compound heterozygous FH) abnormal LDL raising gene defects (LDL receptor, apoB, or PCSK9); includes the rare autosomal-recessive type Occasionally, homozygotes will have LDL-C <400 mg/dL (10 mmol/L)
<b>Family history of FH</b>	LDL-C level not a criterion; presence of a first-degree relative with confirmed FH	Genetic testing not performed

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apoB indicates apolipoprotein B; CAD, coronary artery disease; FH, familial hypercholesterolemia; ICD-10, International Classification of Disease, 10th Revision; LDL, low-density lipoprotein; LDL-C, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol; and PCSK9, proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9.



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**KEY WORDS** ACC Expert Consensus Decision Pathway, ASCVD, bile acid sequestrants, cholesterol, dyslipidemia, ezetimibe, LDL-C, lipids, PCSK9 inhibitors, statins

## APPENDIX 1. AUTHOR RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDUSTRY AND OTHER ENTITIES (RELEVANT)—2017 FOCUSED UPDATE FOR THE 2016 ACC EXPERT CONSENSUS DECISION PATHWAY ON THE ROLE OF NON-STATIN THERAPIES FOR LDL-CHOLESTEROL LOWERING IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ATHEROSCLEROTIC CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE RISK AND THE 2016 ACC EXPERT CONSENSUS DECISION PATHWAY ON THE ROLE OF NON-STATIN THERAPIES FOR LDL-CHOLESTEROL LOWERING IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ATHEROSCLEROTIC CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE RISK

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## APPENDIX 1. CONTINUED

Committee Member	Employment	Consultant	Speakers Bureau	Ownership/ Partnership/ Principal	Personal Research	Institutional, Organizational, or Other Financial Benefit	Expert Witness
Donald M. Lloyd-Jones (Chair)	Northwestern University—Chair, Department of Preventive Medicine; Senior Associate Dean for Clinical and Translational Research; Director, Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute	None	None	None	None	None	None
Pamela B. Morris (Vice Chair)	Medical University of South Carolina—Associate Professor of Medicine, Division of Cardiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Amgen</li> <li>■ AstraZeneca</li> <li>■ Sanofi Regeneron</li> </ul>	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Amgen</li> </ul>	None	None
Christie M. Ballantyne	Baylor College of Medicine and Methodist DeBakey Heart & Vascular Center—Professor of Medicine; Professor of Genetics; Chief, Cardiovascular Research Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Abbott Diagnostics</li> <li>■ Amarin</li> <li>■ Amgen</li> <li>■ AstraZeneca*</li> <li>■ Boehringer Ingelheim*‡</li> <li>■ Eli Lilly</li> <li>■ Esperion</li> <li>■ Genzyme</li> <li>■ Ionis‡</li> <li>■ Matinas BioPharma</li> <li>■ Merck*</li> <li>■ Novartis</li> <li>■ Pfizer*</li> <li>■ Regeneron</li> <li>■ Roche Diagnostics</li> <li>■ Sanofi-Synthelabo*</li> </ul>	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Abbott Diagnostics*</li> <li>■ Amarin*</li> <li>■ Amgen*</li> <li>■ Eli Lilly*</li> <li>■ Esperion*</li> <li>■ GlaxoSmithKline*</li> <li>■ Ionis*‡</li> <li>■ Novartis*</li> <li>■ Otsuka*</li> <li>■ Pfizer*</li> <li>■ Regeneron*</li> <li>■ Roche Diagnostics*</li> <li>■ Sanofi-Synthelabo*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Roche†</li> </ul>	None
Kim K. Birtcher	University of Houston College of Pharmacy—Clinical Professor	None	None	None	None	None	None
David D. Daly, Jr.	Medical University of South Carolina—Cardiology Fellow	None	None	None	None	None	None
Sondra M. DePalma	PinnacleHealth CardioVascular Institute—Physician Assistant	None	None	None	None	None	None
Margo B. Minissian	Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute, Barbara Streisand Women's Heart Center—Nurse Scientist, Clinical Lipid Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sanofi-Aventis Regeneron§</li> </ul>	None	None	None	None	None
Carl E. Orringer	University of Miami Miller School of Medicine—Associate Professor of Medicine	None	None	None	None	None	None
Sidney C. Smith, Jr.	University of North Carolina Center for Cardiovascular Science and Medicine—Professor of Medicine and Director	None	None	None	None	None	None

This table represents the relationships of committee members with industry and other entities that were determined to be relevant to this document. These relationships were reviewed and updated in conjunction with all meetings and/or conference calls of the writing committee during the document development process. The table does not necessarily reflect relationships with industry at the time of publication. A person is deemed to have a significant interest in a business if the interest represents ownership of ≥5% of the voting stock or share of the business entity, or ownership of ≥\$5,000 of the fair market value of the business entity; or if funds received by the person from the business entity exceed 5% of the person's gross income for the previous year. Relationships that exist with no financial benefit are also included for the purpose of transparency. Relationships in this table are modest unless otherwise noted. Please refer to <http://www.acc.org/guidelines/about-guidelines-and-clinical-documents/relationships-with-industry-policy> for definitions of disclosure categories or additional information about the ACC/AHA Disclosure Policy for Writing Committees.

\*Significant relationship.

†No financial benefit.

‡New relationship added in 2017.

§Relationship during development of 2016 Pathway but not during development of 2017 Focused Update.

## APPENDIX 2. PEER REVIEWER INFORMATION—2017 FOCUSED UPDATE AND 2016 ACC EXPERT CONSENSUS DECISION PATHWAY ON THE ROLE OF NON-STATIN THERAPIES FOR LDL-CHOLESTEROL LOWERING IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ATHEROSCLEROTIC CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE RISK

This table represents the individuals, organizations, and groups that peer reviewed this document in 2017 (focused update) and 2016. A list of corresponding comprehensive healthcare-related disclosures for each reviewer is available [online](#).

### 2017 Focused Update

Reviewer	Employment	Representation
Brendan Everett	Brigham and Women's Hospital—Director, General Cardiology Inpatient Service; Harvard Medical School—Assistant Professor	Official Reviewer—ACC Task Force on Expert Consensus Decision Pathways
Andrew P. Miller	Cardiovascular Associates, Birmingham, Alabama—Clinical Cardiologist	Official Reviewer—ACC Board of Governors
Lynn T. Braun	Rush University Medical Center—Professor of Nursing and Medicine	Organizational Reviewer—PCNA
Antonio M. Gotto, Jr.	Weill Medical College of Cornell University—Dean, Provost for Medical Affairs	Organizational Reviewer—NLA
Terry A. Jacobson	Emory University—Professor of Medicine, Director, Lipid Clinic and Cardiovascular Risk Reduction Program	Organizational Reviewer—NLA
Sarah A. Spinler	Philadelphia College of Pharmacy University of the Sciences in Philadelphia—Professor of Clinical Pharmacy	Organizational Reviewer—ACCP
Amy R. Woods	Northeast Mississippi Health Care—Staff Physician	Organizational Reviewer—ACP
Luis C. Afonso	Wayne State University School of Medicine—Professor; Harper University Hospital, Detroit Medical Center—Program Director, Adult Cardiovascular Fellowship; Director, Echocardiography Laboratory	Content Reviewer—ACC Task Force on Expert Consensus Decision Pathways
Roger S. Blumenthal	Johns Hopkins Hospital Ciccarone Preventive Cardiology Center—Pollin Professor of Cardiology	Content Reviewer—ACC Dyslipidemia Clinical Topic Collection
Deborah S. Croy	Bland County Medical Clinic—Adult Cardiovascular Nurse Practitioner	Content Reviewer—Cardiovascular Team Section Leadership Council
Stephen R. Daniels	University of Colorado School of Medicine—Professor and Chair, and Jeanette Leaser, Grants Program Director, Department of Pediatrics; The Children's Hospital Colorado—Pediatrician-in-Chief	Content Reviewer—ACPC Section Leadership Council
Joseph E. Marine	Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine—Associate Professor of Medicine	Content Reviewer—ACC Task Force on Expert Consensus Decision Pathways
Jennifer G. Robinson	University of Iowa—Professor, Departments of Epidemiology and Medicine; Director, Prevention Intervention Center	Content Reviewer—2013 ACC Guideline on the Treatment of Blood Cholesterol to Reduce Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Risk in Adults
Laura J. Ross	Park Nicollet—Physician Assistant	Content Reviewer—ACC Cardiovascular Team Section Leadership Council
Joseph J. Saseen	University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus—Professor and Vice Chair, Department of Clinical Pharmacy; Professor, Department of Family Medicine	Content Reviewer—Cardiovascular Team Section Leadership Council
Michael D. Shapiro	Oregon Health & Science University—Associate Professor of Medicine and Radiology; Knight Cardiovascular Institute—Director, Cardiac MR CT Program Center for Preventive Cardiology	Content Reviewer—Prevention Section Leadership Council
Barbara S. Wiggins	Medical University of South Carolina—Clinical Pharmacy Specialist Cardiology, Department of Pharmacy Services	Content Reviewer—ACC Task Force on Expert Consensus Decision Pathways

*Continued on the next page*



## APPENDIX 2. CONTINUED

### 2016 ACC Expert Consensus Decision Pathway on the Role of Non-Statins Therapies for LDL-Cholesterol Lowering in the Management of Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease Risk

Reviewer	Employment	Representation
Brendan M. Everett	Brigham and Women's Hospital—Director, General Cardiology Inpatient Service; Harvard Medical School—Assistant Professor	Official Reviewer—ACC Task Force on Clinical Expert Consensus Documents
Antonio M. Gotto, Jr.	Weill Medical College of Cornell University—Dean, Provost for Medical Affairs	Official Reviewer—NLA
Terry A. Jacobson	Emory University—Professor of Medicine, Director, Lipid Clinic and Cardiovascular Risk Reduction Program	Official Reviewer—NLA
Andrew P. Miller	Cardiovascular Associates, Birmingham, Alabama—Clinical Cardiologist	Official Reviewer—ACC Board of Governors
Jagat Narula	Mount Sinai School of Medicine—Philip J. & Harriet L. Goodhart Chair in Cardiology, Professor of Medicine	Official Reviewer—ACC Board of Trustees
Roger S. Blumenthal	Johns Hopkins Hospital Ciccarone Preventive Cardiology Center—Pollin Professor of Cardiology	Organizational Reviewer—ACC Dyslipidemia Clinical Topic Collection
Lynne T. Braun	Rush University Medical Center—Professor of Nursing and Medicine	Organizational Reviewer—PCNA
Jennifer G. Robinson	University of Iowa—Professor, Departments of Epidemiology and Medicine	Organizational Reviewer—2013 ACC/AHA Cholesterol Guideline
Laura J. Ross	Park Nicollet—Physician Assistant	Organizational Reviewer—ACC Cardiovascular Team Council
Sarah A. Spinler	Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia—Professor of Clinical Pharmacy	Organizational Reviewer—ACCP
Karol E. Watson	UCLA Medical School—Co-Director, UCLA Program in Preventive Cardiology	Organizational Reviewer—ABC
Amy R. Woods	Northeast Mississippi Health Care—Staff Physician	Organizational Reviewer—ACP
Luis C. Afonso	Wayne State University School of Medicine—Professor; Harper University Hospital, Detroit Medical Center, Wayne State University—Program Director, Adult Cardiovascular Fellowship; Director, Echocardiography Laboratory	Content Reviewer—ACC Task Force on Clinical Expert Consensus Documents
Deborah S. Croy	Bland County Medical Clinic—Adult Cardiovascular Nurse Practitioner	Content Reviewer—Cardiovascular Team Council
Stephen R. Daniels	University of Colorado School of Medicine—Chair, Department of Pediatrics; The Children's Hospital Colorado—Pediatrician-in-Chief; L. Joseph Butterfield Chair in Pediatrics	Content Reviewer—Adult Congenital and Pediatric Cardiology Council
Scott M. Grundy	University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas—Professor of Internal Medicine	Content Reviewer—Chair, Update to ACC/AHA Cholesterol Guideline
James L. Januzzi	Massachusetts General Hospital—Director, Dennis and Marilyn Barry Fellowship in Cardiology Research Cardiology Division; Harvard Medical School—Hutter Family Professor of Medicine	Content Reviewer—Chair, ACC Task Force on Clinical Expert Consensus Documents
Joseph J. Saseen	University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus—Professor and Vice Chair, Department of Clinical Pharmacy; Professor, Department of Family Medicine	Content Reviewer—Cardiovascular Team Council
Michael D. Shapiro	Oregon Health & Science University—Associate Professor of Medicine and Radiology; Knight Cardiovascular Institute—Director, Cardiac MR CT Program Center for Preventive Cardiology	Content Reviewer—Prevention Council
Barbara S. Wiggins	Medical University of South Carolina—Clinical Pharmacy Specialist Cardiology, Department of Pharmacy Services	Content Reviewer—ACC Task Force on Clinical Expert Consensus Documents

ABC indicates Association of Black Cardiologists; ACC, American College of Cardiology; ACCP, American College of Clinical Pharmacy; ACP, American College of Physicians; AHA, American Heart Association; CT, computed tomography; MR, magnetic resonance; NLA, National Lipid Association; and PCNA, Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association.

### APPENDIX 3. ABBREVIATIONS

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ACC = American College of Cardiology  
ACS = acute coronary syndrome  
AHA = American Heart Association  
ASCVD = atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease  
BAS = bile acid sequestrant  
CKD = chronic kidney disease  
ECDP = Expert Consensus Decision Pathway  
FH = familial hypercholesterolemia  
HDL = high-density lipoprotein  
HDL-C = high-density lipoprotein cholesterol  
HeFH = heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia

HoFH = homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia  
HPS2-THRIVE = Heart Protection Study 2-Treatment of  
HDL to Reduce the Incidence of Vascular Events  
IMPROVE-IT = Improved Reduction of Outcomes: Vytorin  
Efficacy International Trial  
LDL-C = low-density lipoprotein cholesterol  
PCSK9 = proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin 9  
RCT = randomized controlled trial  
RDN = registered dietitian-nutritionist  
TC = total cholesterol

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