Statins may decrease AV calcium accumulation

HMG CoA reductase inhibitors [statins] may slow the accumulation of calcium on aortic valves (AV), and therefore, *'may favourably alter the natural history of calcific aortic valvular disease'*, according to researchers from the US.

They retrospectively analysed data from 65 patients who had undergone two electron-beam computed tomography scans to evaluate coronary calcium at a mean interval of 2.5 years. Of the 65 patients, 28 were receiving statin therapy at the time of both scans. None of the remaining patients (controls) was receiving statin therapy at the time of either scan. The researchers note that statin recipients, compared with controls, were twice as likely to have a diagnosis of hyperlipidaemia or hypertension.

The median rate of AV calcium accumulation was significantly lower in statin recipients, compared with controls, as assessed by the Agatston method (12.1 *vs* 32% per year) or the volumetric method (10.6 *vs* 28.4% per year). Furthermore, definite AV calcium accumulation was observed in significantly fewer statin recipients than controls (32 *vs* 57% of patients).

This encouraging observation supports the need for prospective randomised trials to assess the potential role of statins in preventing calcific aortic valve disease, conclude the researchers.

Shavelle DM, et al. HMG CoA reductase inhibitor (statin) and aortic valve calcium. Lancet 359: 1125-1126, 30 Mar 2002

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