

[IMAGE]

An Apple a Day Keeps the Statin Drugs at Bay

By G. Douglas Andersen, DC, DACBSP, CCN

On the 100th anniversary of the first appearance of the phrase, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," researchers from Oxford published a paper titled "A Statin a Day Keeps the Doctor Away: Comparative Proverb Assessment Modeling Study." After I read the paper, I felt "An Apple a Day Keeps the Statins at Bay" was a better direction for doctors and their patients.

In their paper, researchers calculated that if everyone over age 50 in the United Kingdom took statin drugs, approximately 9,400 deaths from cardiovascular disease would be prevented every year [if approximately 17 million people over the age of 50 who do not meet the U.K.'s Rx criteria took a statin drug anyway (5 million U.K. adults over age 50 take statins to lower cholesterol.).]

They then applied the same formula, substituting an apple for the drug and an equal number of calories, consumed by 70 percent of 22 million citizens ages 50 and above. (The 95 or so calories provided by the apple were subtracted from other meals so there would not be a daily increase.) Their results revealed that if 70 percent complied, a apple a day would prevent approximately 8,500 deaths a year – almost 1,000 less than the statin drug. However, when researchers estimated side effects, they discovered the stain drug also would cause almost 14,000 serious problems a year:

- Type 2 diabetes: 12,300 cases
- Myopathy (a muscular disease): 1,200 cases
- Rhabdomyolysis (a condition that can lead to kidney failure): 200 cases

apple - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark When they repeated the exercise using adults ages 30 and older, the researchers estimated that statins would save another 200 lives each year, bringing the adjusted total of prevented deaths to 9,600. But apples would prevent 300 more deaths, reaching 8,800 annually. However, if 30-year-olds all started taking a daily statin, the number of side effects would explode:

- Type 2 diabetes: up 99 percent to 24,400 cases
- Myopathy: up 100 percent to 2,400 cases
- Rhabdomyolysis: up 100 percent to 400 cases

If compliance with the apple regimen (or a second apple, for those who already consumed one a day) was 90 percent instead of the 70 percent, the annual reduction of death from cardiovascular causes would reach 11,000 – a 29 percent increase for a 20 percent higher compliance rate.

At the end of the article is a text box titled "What This Study Adds": "An apple a day or a statin a day is equally likely to keep the doctor away." I must respectfully disagree: Yes, they may be equally likely to keep the undertaker away, but with 14,000 preventable cases of diabetes and muscle disease every year, "A statin a day guarantees the doctor gets pay."

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