

ASHBY ADVISOR

Twenty-third edition
April 2008

As promised last month, we will talk about the ongoing controversy over the use (and some argue overuse of statin drugs). But first – let’s be clear – this information is to help educate you on current research, not to diagnose or treat you.

According to several medical researchers, including Dr. James Wright of the University of British Columbia (whose job is analyzing data on the effectiveness of drugs on large populations) – for patients with no prior history of heart disease taking statins to lower cholesterol had no overall reduction in total deaths or illnesses requiring hospitalizations. The significant benefit was for patients with prior heart attacks and/or known heart disease and significant risk factors; i.e. obesity, family history of heart disease, etc. Those people with high risk factors were the original intenders of statins.

Researchers have put together “numbers to treat” (NTT) that give the number of people that have to take a drug in order to have one person benefit the way it was intended. For example: In people who have had a heart attack or signs of heart disease, one person out of twenty will be saved from death or hospitalization by statins. Pretty good odds. If a person has high blood pressure and moderately high cholesterol, but no heart disease – 500 people have to be treated with statins for one benefit.

I know this is controversial, but the costs for drugs is staggering, but so is the cost for bypass surgery. The cost to put 500 people on Lipitor at \$100.00/month for a year would be \$600,000. Bypass surgery can run \$100,000 with any complications.

We spend more per capita for health care than just about any country in the world. Yet we rank far down the list in longevity. The answer isn’t always in spending more money, but being smart about our lifestyle choices.

So, what’s a person to do to reduce risk for heart disease otherwise? A good diet and physical exercise. Eat a Mediterranean type diet. Google it to get specifics. (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mediterranean-diet/CL00011>)

*Quote of the email: The best angle to solving problems is try-angle.