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Can Cholesterol-Lowering Medicine Make Radiation More Effective at Curing Prostate Cancer?

Los Angeles – Patients with prostate cancer who receive high-dose radiation treatment and also take statin drugs commonly used to lower cholesterol have a 10 percent higher chance of being cured of their cancer at 10 years after diagnosis (76 percent), compared to those who don't take these medications (66 percent), according to a study presented at a scientific session October 31, 2007, at the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology's 49th Annual Meeting in Los Angeles.

The study demonstrated that the greatest benefit of statin medications was observed in patients who had more aggressive or advanced forms of prostate cancer. The research also showed that men who took statins during high-dose radiation therapy had a lower rate of the cancer spreading to distant parts of the body.

“We were, indeed, surprised by the findings that statins used by these patients for other conditions was shown to improve the effectiveness of radiation treatment in killing prostate cancer cells,” said Michael J. Zelefsky, M.D., the senior author of the study and a radiation oncologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. “The use of statins during radiation may also be effective in the treatment of other types of cancer. However, more studies are necessary to explore the association between statins and radiation treatment in curing cancers.”

The retrospective study involved nearly 900 men treated with high-dose radiation therapy for prostate cancer, some of whom were also taking statin drugs, from January 1995 to July 2000. Statins are a class of drugs used to lower the cholesterol level in people with or at risk of cardiovascular disease.

For more information on treatments for prostate cancer, visit www.rtanswers.org.

The abstract, “*Statin Use and Clinical Outcomes after High Dose Radiotherapy for Prostate Cancer*,” will be presented in a scientific session from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, October 31, 2007. To speak to the senior study author, Michael J. Zelefsky, M.D., please call Beth Bukata or Nicole Napoli October 28-31, 2007, in the ASTRO Press Room at the Los Angeles Convention Center at 213-743-6222 or 213-743-6223. You may also e-mail them at bethb@astro.org or nicolen@astro.org.

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