Statins as a Primary Prevention: Which One is Most Effective? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Gemma Figg¹, Alex Jervis¹, Susannah Champion¹, Jane Langley² and Gary Adams³*

¹MNurSci, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Health Sciences, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, United Kingdom
²BSc (Hons), Intensive Care, United Lincolnshire ULH Trust, Greetwell Road, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN2 5QY, Andy Meal
³Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, The Insulin Diabetes Experimental Research Group, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2UH, United Kingdom

Abstract

Background: Type 2 diabetics are at high risk of atherosclerosis and Cardiovascular (CV) events due to their associated dyslipidemic profile. Adverse levels of the lipid triad: Low-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol (LDL-C), High-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol (HDL-C) and Triglycerides (TGs), have been shown to be major contributing factors. Statins (HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors) are recommended as first-line lipid therapy as evidence has shown their effectiveness in primary and secondary prevention of CV events. However, there is limited evidence specifically focused on primary prevention in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) and dyslipidemia. The main purpose of this review was to assess the efficacy of statins in type 2 diabetics with dyslipidemia for the primary prevention of CV events.

Methods: A systematic review was carried out to determine the effectiveness of statins in T2DM and dyslipidemia. A comprehensive literature search identified Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) specific to participants with T2DM and dyslipidemia without prior CV events, which investigated the effects of statins on the lipid triad. Bias and quality of the studies were assessed and data extracted was critically analysed. Meta-analyses were carried out to determine the significance of statin effects. PRISMA guidelines were adhered to throughout.

Results: 10 RCTs were included investigating the effects of six statins. Statins were shown to improve the lipid triad by lowering LDL-C and TGs and increasing HDL-C, in agreement with previous research. Atorvastatin and rosuvastatin were shown to be most potent in reducing LDL-C and TGs and simvastatin showed the greatest increases in HDL-C. Meta-analyses demonstrated significance favouring statins for LDL-C and TG reductions but less evidence of significant effect of HDL-C improvement with all statins. Statins were well tolerated and adverse effects were minimal.

Conclusion: Primary prevention in this high risk population is very important. Statins are effective at reducing CV event risk, and clinicians should have knowledge of most appropriate statin treatments for patients based on individual lipid levels.

Keywords: Type 2 diabetes mellitus; Statins; Preventative medicine

Introduction

The metabolic pathway that produces cholesterol and other isoprenoids is known as the mevalonate pathway. The rate-controlling enzyme of this pathway is 3-hydroxy-3-methyl-glutaryl-CoA reductase (HMGCR). This rate-controlling step in the biosynthesis of isoprenoids and sterols can be restricted by the use of statins [1].

This step involves the four-electron reductive deacylation of HMG-CoA to CoA and mevalonate. It is catalysed by HMG in a reaction that proceeds as follows:

(S) HMG CoA + 2 NADP⁺ + CoASH

⇒ (R)

Mevalonate + 2 NADP⁺ + CoASH

Where NADP⁺ is the oxidized form of nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide, NADPH is the reduced form of NADP⁺, and CoASH is the reduced form of CoA.

One specific intervention for the use of HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors or statins is the potent effect on cholesterol [2]. The dyslipidemic profile of patients presenting with T2DM is distinguished by increased Triglycerides (TGs) and decreased High-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol (HDL-C). Low-density lipoproteins (LDL) become smaller and denser causing atherogenicity, even if concentrations are not significantly increased [3]. Lipoprotein Lipase (LPL), necessary for TG breakdown, is decreased due to insulin deficiency [4]. Decreased TG clearance, contributes to increase hepatic Very-Low-Density Lipoproteins (VLDL), which lower HDL-C by exchanging cholesterol from HDL to VLDL. HDL become smaller and cleared more easily, resulting in decreased HDL-C levels. HDL-C is cardio-protective and reduction is accompanied by reduced antioxidant and anti-atherogenic activities. HDL-C reduction also means LDL oxidation is not prevented as effectively. Small, dense LDL particles result from increased VLDL. They are pro-atherogenic and readily undergo oxidative modification [5]. Oxidised LDL is taken up by macrophages to form foam cells. Accumulation of foam cells form fatty streaks, invading arterial walls, proceeding to atherosclerosis and associated macrovascular effects [6].

The consequences of dyslipidemia in T2DM make apparent the
need to deliver care to this high risk group in order to reduce premature mortality [7]. T2DM is considered a cardiovascular disease per se and evidence suggests prevention should be sought as though CVD is present, even without signs of manifestation [8]. Studies have shown T2DM patients without CVD are just as at risk of CV events as those without DM with CVD.

First-line pharmacological intervention to improve lipids and prevent CV complications in T2DM is thus the use of statins. LDL-C, HDL-C and TG levels are all high risk factors for cardiac events in diabetics with dyslipidemia, so aim of treatment is to improve all. High risk levels include: LDL-C ≥130 mg/dL; HDL-C ≤ 40 mg/dL; and TGs>150 mg/dL [3,9].

Current statins available are: Atorvastatin, Fluvastatin, Pravastatin, Rosuvastatin and Simvastatin [10]. Statins reduce cholesterol synthesis and up-regulate LDL receptor synthesis, which promotes cholesterol removal from the blood [5]. Statins are well tolerated with generally mild side effects [11]. The potentially fatal side-effect is myositis, leading to rhabdomyolysis and progressing to renal failure.

Primary and secondary CVD prevention trials showed statins enabled significant CV event reduction. There was limited information on primary prevention in DM until results from diabetes subgroups of the Heart Protection Study and the Collaborative Atorvastatin Diabetes Study [12] (Table 1). Both reduced CV risk significantly. However, T2DM participants recruited did not on average have dyslipidemic profiles typical of T2DM manifestation. Participants may not have been at such high risk as dyslipidemic T2DM patients, as lipid complications may not yet have risen sufficiently to cause CV damage. It is questionable whether their findings would have been so beneficial if participants had more adverse lipids.

LDL-C, HDL-C and TGs all contribute to atherogenesis in T2DM, so guidelines for lipid levels need to be targeted. The American Diabetes Association recommends target treatment goals for T2DM with statins include: LDL-C <100 mg/dL; HDL-C >40 mg/dL (men) and >50 mg/dL (women); and TG levels <150 mg/dL [9]. From in-depth research on primary preventative trials in T2DM, it was discovered there are few studies that focus solely on this lipid triad in T2DM and dyslipidemia.

This Review focuses on statins as a primary prevention method to determine which statin is most effective in improving LDL-C, HDL-C and TG levels. By using participants with high-risk lipid profiles this Review will determine, which statin is greatest at achieving ADA target levels and at what dosage the most beneficial statin should be administered.

**Methods**

A SR of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) was carried out. This SR centred specifically on T2DM. Participants were required to have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study No.</th>
<th>Source/Year</th>
<th>Study Title</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Study Participants</th>
<th>Study Intervention</th>
<th>Study Outcomes</th>
<th>Study Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lam, Chu, Wei et al (2006)</td>
<td>The effects of different doses of atorvastatin on plasma endothelin-1 levels in type 2 diabetic patients with dyslipidemia.</td>
<td>Study was a randomized, dose-ranging, open-labelled, parallel group clinical trial which aimed to investigate the effect of atorvastatin 10, 20 and 40mg, on plasma endothelin (ET-1) and CRP (C-reactive protein) levels in 29 participants with T2DM and dyslipidemia.</td>
<td>29 T2DM men and women aged 18 to 80, from outpatient clinics in Kaohsiung Veterans General Hospital, Taiwan. Women were required to be postmenopausal, surgically sterilized or using birth control. Participants had to have an HbA1c (glycosylated hemoglobin) level of ≤10%; LDL-C ≥130mg/dL; and a fasting TG level of &lt;400mg/dL.</td>
<td>Participants were randomized to receive either atorvastatin 10mg (n=10), 20mg (n=10) or 40mg (n=9), daily for 12 weeks.</td>
<td>Outcome parameters measured after the 12 weeks were: TC, TGs, HDL-C, LDL-C, CRP, CK (creatinine kinase), ET-1, fasting glucose, HbA1c, systolic blood pressure and diastolic blood pressure.</td>
<td>Atorvastatin 20mg was found to be the most beneficial dose in treating dyslipidemia in T2DM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lawerence, Reid, Taylor et al (2004)</td>
<td>The effect of high dose atorvastatin therapy on lipids and lipoprotein subfractions in overweight patients with type 2 diabetes.</td>
<td>Study was a double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled design, which aimed to investigate the effects of 80mg atorvastatin on LDL, VLDL and HDL over a period of 8 weeks.</td>
<td>40 overweight men and women aged 45-75; had a duration of T2DM for at least a year; HbA1c ≤10%; fasting TC level between 4.0 and 8.0mmol/L; and fasting TG level between 1.5 and 6.0mmol/L.</td>
<td>Participants were randomized to receive atorvastatin 80mg daily (n=20) or placebo daily (n=20) for 8 weeks.</td>
<td>Outcome included: TC, TGs, HDL-C, apoB, TC/HDL-C ratio as well as LDL subfractions, VLDL subfractions and HDL subfractions.</td>
<td>High dose atorvastatin (80mg) had beneficial effects on lipoprotein subfractions, enhancing anti-atherogenic effects in T2DM and dyslipidemia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The DALI study group (2001)</td>
<td>The effect of aggressive versus standard lipid lowering by atorvastatin on diabetic dyslipidemia.</td>
<td>A double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized study was designed to assess the effect of atorvastatin 10 &amp; 80mg on plasma TG levels after 30 weeks.</td>
<td>217 T2DM male and female participants from outpatient clinics in The Netherlands. Participants were aged 45-75; had a duration of T2DM for at least a year; HbA1c ≤10%; fasting TC level between 4.0 and 8.0mmol/L; and fasting TG level between 1.5 and 6.0mmol/L.</td>
<td>Participants were randomized to treatment with either 10mg atorvastatin (n=73), 80mg atorvastatin (n=72) or placebo (n=72) for 30 weeks.</td>
<td>Participants randomized to 80mg started with 40mg for 4 weeks then this was increased to 80mg.</td>
<td>Participants were randomized to treatment with either 10mg atorvastatin (n=73), 80mg atorvastatin (n=72) or placebo (n=72) for 30 weeks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1:** Studies investigating the effects of atorvastatin treatment.
or have an aspect of a dyslipidemic profile as defined by LDL-C ≥ 130 mg/dL; HDL-C <40 mg/dL and TG levels >150 mg/dL. The focus was primary prevention of CV events so only participants without macrovascular conditions were included. All ages, sex and ethnicities were included to ensure findings were globally relevant to healthcare. Dose and duration of treatment was not specified. A comprehensive database search was carried out to identify eligible RCTs from the years 2000 to 2012.

Primary outcomes were LDL-C, HDL-C and TG levels after statin treatment and whether ADA targets were achieved. Secondary outcomes included adverse effects of statin treatments. This was important as statins may be effective at improving lipids but have side effects disadvantageous in administration.

The Cochrane Collaboration’s tool for assessing risk of bias and the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool were used to critically judge the sources. Using the CASP tool, each study was scored on a scale of 1-9, determining overall quality (low-high) [13].

Meta-analyses were carried out to provide precise estimates of overall treatment effects [14]. The I² test assessed heterogeneity, which showed the percentage of variability in effect estimates due to heterogeneity rather than chance.

## Results

The comprehensive search produced 601 potentially relevant RCTs. 568 were immediately excluded and 33 full texts were obtained. On detailed evaluation 10 studies remained for inclusion: 1) 3 investigated atorvastatin; 2) 3 investigated simvastatin; 3) I investigated rosuvastatin; and 4) 3 compared more than one statin, collectively consisting of: rosuvastatin, atorvastatin, fluvastatin, simvastatin, pravastatin and lovastatin.

### Primary outcome: Lipid triad levels

All doses of atorvastatin investigated enabled significant percentage reductions in LDL-C and TGs. Atorvastatin 80 mg showed greatest effect sizes for LDL-C [15,16] (Figure 1) (I²=97%) and 10 mg demonstrated most significant TG decreases [15,17] (Figure 2) (I²=97%). These represented some of the largest LDL-C and TG reductions compared to other statins.

In contrast, atorvastatin had less benefit on HDL-C. HDL-C was not improved by any atorvastatin dose investigated by Lam et al. [18] or Lawrence et al. [16] but was increased by 5-6% (p<0.005) by 10 mg and 80 mg investigated by The DALI study group and by 7.4% with 10 mg investigated by Gentile et al. [15-18]. Meta-analyses demonstrated 10mg did cause significant effects (Figure 3) (I²=97%). However, there was no strong evidence of significant effect of atorvastatin 80 mg on HDL-C (Figure 4) (I²=32%).

Studies investigating simvastatin showed improvement in the whole lipid triad, but demonstrated greatest improvements in HDL-C compared to other statins. Shue et al. [19] showed 20 mg enabled the largest HDL-C increase (table 2) (Figure 5). Simvastatin 80 mg was the...
dose found to cause most significant reductions in LDL-C and TGs from the simvastatin studies (p<0.01) [15,19].

Rosuvastatin was found to have similar reductions in LDL-C and TGs to atorvastatin (Table 3). Both Vergès et al. [20] and Betteridge and Gibson [21] demonstrated 20 mg produced the greatest LDL-C and TG benefits (-51%/-57.4%, -38%/-22.7%, respectively) [20,21]. However, rosuvastatin was not effective at improving HDL-C.

Bevilacqua et al. found fluvastatin XL-80mg and simvastatin 20mg produced significant reductions in LDL-C and TGs (p<0.01) [22]. In contrast fluvastatin increased HDL-C significantly (p<0.05) whereas simvastatin did not modify HDL-C. Gentile and colleagues demonstrated atorvastatin showed greater benefits compared to simvastatin, pravastatin and lovastatin (Table 4) [17].

**Primary outcome: ADA targets achieved?**

The studies investigating atorvastatin showed variation in meeting ADA targets. However, LDL-C, TGs and HDL-C targets were met by the majority of doses studied. There were differences between simvastatin studies in achieving LDL-C targets. However, all doses investigated achieved HDL-C target and no dose reached TG target.

It was not possible to determine whether rosuvastatin 20 mg investigated by Vergès et al. enabled targets due to insufficient published data, however Betteridge and Gibson showed both rosuvastatin 10mg and 20mg were successful [20,21]. Bevilacqua et al. [22] demonstrated fluvastatin enabled LDL-C and HDL-C targets but not TGs. Gentile et al. showed no statin investigated achieved LDL-C or TG targets, but all met HDL-C target [17].

**Secondary outcome: Adverse effects**

Studies investigating atorvastatin presented most adverse effects, although numbers of participants affected were minimal. Simvastatin treatment was reported as well tolerated. Vergès et al. stated rosuvastatin was generally well tolerated, although numbers of participants affected were minimal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study or Sub group</th>
<th>Atorvastatin 80mg Mean</th>
<th>Placebo Mean</th>
<th>Mean Difference IV, Random, 95% CI</th>
<th>Mean Difference IV, Random, 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study2</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.30 [-6.51, 3.91]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study3</td>
<td>42.14</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.93 [1.48, 2.38]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (95% CI)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>1.40 [-0.94, 3.74]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 4](forest_plot.png) **Figure 4:** Forest plot of comparison: Atorvastatin 80mg vs Placebo: HDL-C.

**Table 2:** Studies investigating the effects of simvastatin treatment.
was well tolerated but Betteridge and Gibson demonstrated rosuvastatin caused serious adverse effects similar to atorvastatin [20,21]. Gentile et al. stated side effects for all statins studied were mild [17].

Discussion

This SR and meta-analysis showed support for statin administration to prevent CV events as they improved the lipid triad and aided achievement of ADA targets. However, issues were raised that contribute to knowledge of statin efficacy in T2DM.

Lam et al. found neither atorvastatin 10/20/40 mg improved HDL-C. In fact, HDL-C decreased with all doses and Lam et al. stated this was “not a negative dose-response effect of atorvastatin on HDL-C as previously reported” [18].

Negative dose-response describes progressively decreasing HDL-C levels as dosage increases [12]. Wierzbicki and Mihalidis found low dose atorvastatin increased HDL-C and ApoA-1, its associated apolipoprotein, but effects diminished with increasing dose suggesting negative dose-response [23]. However, these findings were not based on T2DM. They also found 10mg still increased HDL-C, however, another study showed 10 mg decreased HDL-C, which suggests this latter study and researchers were correct in their statement [18,23].

Similarly, Lawrence et al. found HDL-C decreased with atorvastatin 80 mg [16]. They found significant negative effect on ApoA-1 and HDL-C (p<0.05) demonstrating high-dose atorvastatin potentially limits antiatherogenic protection HDL-C provides. However, in contrast The DALI study group showed significant increases in HDL-C for both doses of atorvastatin (10/80 mg) (p<0.005) [15]. The increase in HDL-C reduced the total cholesterol (TC): HDL-C ratio, which prevents against atherosclerosis.

Heliç et al. study demonstrated 6 months of simvastatin 40mg did not improve lipids as effectively as 80 mg or 20 mg [19,24,25]. Evidence has shown 40mg can have greater effects in less time than shown by Heliç’s study. In hypercholesterolaemic participants Miller, Dobs, Yuen et al. found 40 mg improved lipids more significantly after six weeks and Li and colleagues demonstrated the same in two weeks [26,27]. Therefore the results from Heliç’s study were potentially an anomaly.

It could be stated the results were due to obese participants. Increase in central adiposity decreases LPL activity and results in increased production of atherogenic particles [17]. Isley et al. [25] also used obese participants, but they were consuming a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet which may explain their improvement in LPL activity and therefore the lipid triad [23]. This could provide explanation for the differing results found by Heljiç’s study, whose participants were not diet-controlled.

Sheu et al. study showed the highest HDL-C increase (11%) with simvastatin 20mg, despite being the lowest simvastatin dose and the shortest simvastatin study [19]. However, Sheu stated treatment dose was doubled after 4 weeks if participants’ LDL-C exceeded 130 mg/dL. Without individual participant data, it was not determined how many participants this involved. The results of Sheu may have represented the effects of simvastatin 40 mg as opposed to 20 mg.

Vergès et al. study found rosuvastatin 20 mg did not improve HDL-C and gave no explanation why [20]. However, they found treatment significantly increased total catabolism of VLDL. This showed, although rosuvastatin 20 mg did not increase HDL-C, it prevented HDL-C becoming TG-enriched and from becoming cleared more easily. Therefore rosuvastatin 20 mg had indirect effects, suggesting if statins can prevent HDL-C decreasing, this is beneficial even if levels are not increased. Betteridge and Gibson [21] also found rosuvastatin was not significant at increasing HDL-C. However, they did not discuss VLDL catabolism so it cannot be certain rosuvastatin consistently shows the same benefits [26].

Bevilacqua et al. demonstrated fluvastatin XL-80mg increased HDL-C but simvastatin 20 mg did not [22]. This contrasted to the simvastatin studies that demonstrated its effects on the whole lipid triad. However, despite dissimilar HDL-C findings between fluvastatin and simvastatin, improvements in ApoA-1 were similar (+8 mg/dL, +13 mg/dL, respectively). Therefore lack of HDL-C increase with simvastatin 20 mg was possibly a discrepancy.

The duration of studies had an impact on achieving ADA targets. The studies by Lam and Lawrence showed atorvastatin 10 mg/80 mg did not achieve LDL-C targets, however, The DALI study group found they did, which was the longest study of the three. Similarly Isley [25] and Betteridge and Gibson [21] found simvastatin 80 mg...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study No.</th>
<th>Source/Year</th>
<th>Study Title</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Study Participants</th>
<th>Study Intervention</th>
<th>Study Outcomes</th>
<th>Study Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Betteridge and Gibson (2007)</td>
<td>Effects of rosuvastatin on lipids, lipoproteins and apolipoproteins in the dyslipidaemia of diabetes.</td>
<td>A double-blind, randomized, multicentre study was carried out to compare the effects of rosuvastatin and atorvastatin on LDL-C as well as other secondary lipid and lipoprotein endpoints.</td>
<td>494 participants were recruited from 45 centres in the UK. They were male and female; had a diagnosis of T2DM; at least age 18; were treated with diet and/or or oral glucose-lowering agents; and had at least two fasting blood glucose levels of &gt;7.0mmol/l before randomization; and a plasma TG level of ≤5.6mmol/l.</td>
<td>494 participants were randomized to treatment with rosuvastatin 10mg (n=246) once daily. Treatment with 10mg was carried out for 8 weeks, and this was then doubled to 20mg for a further 8 weeks.</td>
<td>Outcomes measured included HDL-C subfractions; TGs; ApoA-I subfractions; TC/ HDL-C; LDL-C; non-HDL-C/HDL-C; ApoB/ApoA-I; LDL-C and TC, after both 8 weeks and 16 weeks of treatment.</td>
<td>Rosuvastatin was shown to improve subfractions more beneficially than equal doses of atorvastatin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bevilacqua, Righini, Barrella et.al (2005)</td>
<td>Effects of fluvastatin slow-release (XL-80mg) versus simvastatin (20mg) on the lipid triad in patients with type 2 diabetes.</td>
<td>This RCT was a prospective, open-label, blinded-endpoint study that was conducted in a single centre in Italy. It was carried out to determine whether statins have positive effects on all components of the lipid triad in type 2 diabetics.</td>
<td>94 participants were included with T2DM and the lipid triad (TGs &gt;2.3mmol/l; HDL-C &lt;1.3mmol/l; and elevated levels of small dense LDL). All participants were being treated with metformin, glibenclamide, and glibenclamide, and some were also receiving insulin glargine.</td>
<td>After a 4 week dietary run-in phase, participants were randomized to receive either fluvastatin XL-80mg (n=48) or simvastatin (n=48), once daily (at bedtime) for 8 weeks.</td>
<td>Outcomes focused on were the lipid triad of LDL-C, TGs and HDL-C, as well as ApoA-I; ApoB and LDL subfractions.</td>
<td>The lipid triad was more successfully controlled with fluvastatin XL-80mg, compared to simvastatin, in participants with T2DM and dyslipidemia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Gentile, Turco, Guarino et.al (2000)</td>
<td>Comparative efficacy study of atorvastatin vs simvastatin, pravastatin, lovastatin and placebo in type 2 diabetic patients with hypercholesterolaemia-mia.</td>
<td>A multi-centre, open-label, randomized, parallel-group, comparative study in order to compare atorvastatin 10mg daily with simvastatin 10mg daily, lovastatin 20mg daily, pravastatin 20mg daily and placebo. Focus of the study was to compare the efficacy and safety of the statins.</td>
<td>409 male and female T2DM participants were studied. They were aged 50-65 and had all had the onset of diabetes after the age of 40. They had LDL-C concentrations of &gt;160mg/dl and TG concentrations of ≤400mg/dl.</td>
<td>Participants began following the NIH modified NCEP step 1 diet programme for 6 weeks before being randomized to atorvastatin (n=84), simvastatin (n=78), pravastatin (n=81), lovastatin (n=80) or placebo (n=86) for 24 weeks. The diet was also continued throughout the duration of the treatment.</td>
<td>Outcomes measured were the percentage changes in LDL-C levels after 24 weeks and the percentage change in TC, TG and HDL-C at week 24.</td>
<td>Atorvastatin showed the greatest percentage changes in all outcomes measured, compared to other statins and placebo investigated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Studies investigating the comparative effects of statins.

and atorvastatin 10 mg, respectively, were near to TG target, but had treatment been longer target may have been met. Baseline lipid levels also had an impact. Very high baseline TGs were demonstrated by The DALI study group and Bevilacqua [22], which could have affected how quickly TG levels were reduced.

ADA targets for HDL-C differ for men and women (>40 mg/dL, >50 mg/dL), respectively. The RCTs consisted of male and female participants but individual participant data was unavailable. The target value of >40 mg/dL was used to represent the mixed sex samples. HDL-C targets were met by atorvastatin 80mg however it must be emphasized baseline HDL-C for these groups were higher than final measurements, so atorvastatin did not enable target achievement [19,20]. These shows T2DM patients with lower HDL-C would not necessarily benefit from atorvastatin to increase HDL-C.

One participant withdrew from Lawrence study because of increases in Alanine Transaminase (ALT). ALT is a liver enzyme and elevations indicate liver dysfunction. Ballantyne et al. found hypercholesterolemic participants treated with atorvastatin 80mg were more likely to have ALT elevations [28]. Neither Lam study nor The DALI study group reported this with lower doses of atorvastatin so elevation could be related to higher dosage. This is supported by Armitage who stated effect of statins on transaminase is dependent upon dose [29]. Betteridge and Gibson [21] stated incidence of myalgia was low for both atorvastatin and rosuvastatin, but consistent with other clinical trials [30]. However, if a consistent finding, this may present safety risks of taking either.

Only a small number of RCTs were available to examine for this SR. More studies would have been sufficient to confirm or disagree with the findings. Two studies used Taiwanese participants so their results cannot be generalised globally due to cultural differences in lifestyle and genetics. Three studies used overweight participants so also cannot be generalizable to all with T2DM. However, obesity is a contributing factor to T2DM development and due to increasing obesity levels findings are applicable to overweight patients. The studies varied in lengths of T2DM diagnosis. If participants had T2DM a long time, baselines were possibly less adverse than if recently diagnosed due to treatments commenced. The studies varied in durations and number of participants. This heterogeneity influenced the findings and potentially impacted upon how successful statins appeared.

Implications and recommendations for clinical practice

The results from this Review imply T2DM patients should have lipid levels measured early. It is important treatment is not standardized with simvastatin 40mg, as recommended, because patients’ levels may vary. How long patients go undiagnosed, due to lack of symptoms, can
affect how high risk levels may be. By knowing patients’ levels, statin treatment can be individualised.

For those with high LDL-C and TGs, atorvastatin or rosuvastatin may be beneficial as a primary preventative treatment. Levels are likely to reduce quickly due to their potent effects. High doses may be most effective, but caution should be taken in case of adverse effects. In contrast, those with less high risk profiles may benefit from simvastatin. Simvastatin showed overall benefit with all doses, but 80mg may present more significant effects in this population.

Care of T2DM dyslipidemic patients should be individualised. It is important to determine whether treatment is improving patients’ lipids. Monitoring lipid triads and reviewing statin treatment regularly would assist in CVD prevention.

Conclusion

T2DM patients can have very adverse lipid profiles. Baseline lipids of participants in studies systematically reviewed emphasised the importance of primary prevention. As well as simvastatin, as recommended by NICE, this SR has shown the efficacy of atorvastatin and rosuvastatin. Atorvastatin and rosuvastatin were most potent in reducing LDL-C and TGs, whereas simvastatin showed the greatest increases in HDL-C. Meta-analyses demonstrated significance favouring statins for LDL-C and TG reductions, but showed less evidence of significant effect for HDL-C improvements. The ten studies showed overall statins were well tolerated and adverse effects were minimal.

Future research may consider studies all of the same intervention duration, in order to reduce heterogeneity. Research may be warranted on whether atorvastatin and rosuvastatin improve HDL-C in T2DM and dyslipidemia, and whether negative dose-responses associated with atorvastatin, and increases in ApoA-I with rosuvastatin are consistent findings. High-dose fluvastatin showed significant benefits in this review, but further research in this population would be needed to conclude whether it could be a CV prevention measure.

References