

## The prescribing pattern, side effects, utilisation and cost of 'Statins' in Sri Lanka

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Statins are now the most commonly used class of drugs for reduction of serum lipids, in prevention of Coronary Heart Disease (CHD). There are differences between different statins in efficacy, evidence from clinical trials and costs. This study was done to find out the prescribing pattern, side effects, sales pattern, utilisation and cost of statins in Sri Lanka. Prescribing pattern and side effects were collected from patients attending outpatient clinics at the Cardiology Unit of Colombo National Hospital. The sales details of statins were obtained from three Osusala outlets. The utilisation was calculated using the Daily Defined Doses (DDD) of statins.

Data was collected from 180 patients taking statins. Age ranged from 38 to 79 years with 64% males and 36% females. In 2002, 51.1% patients were prescribed lovastatin, followed by atorvastatin (30%) and simvastatin (19%). In 2001, only 7.6% were prescribed atorvastatin. The indication was secondary prevention of CHD in 90% patients and primary prevention in 10%. On calculation of utilisation using the sales data, in 2002 highest was atorvastatin with 0.35 per 1000 population receiving it, followed by 0.339 and 0.3 per 1000 respectively using lovastatin and simvastatin. There was a wide difference in price range of different brands (eg. Rs 16 - 190 for simvastatin). In 2002 the cost of cheapest lovastatin, simvastatin and atorvastatin was Rs. 13.02, 16.01, 5.65 per DDD respectively. Only few minor side effects were seen. No serious side effects were noted. CPK levels done in patients who had muscle symptoms were normal. Very few patients had cholesterol levels monitored and they showed effective lowering of lipids.

There is a change in the prescribing and utilization pattern of statins with reduction of lovastatin use and increased utilisation of atorvastatin in 2002 compared to 2001. However, lovastatin still remains the most commonly prescribed drug. Atorvastatin is more effective than simvastatin or lovastatin in lowering LDL cholesterol. Prescribers should be informed of higher efficacy and lower cost of atorvastatin compared to simvastatin and lovastatin. Patients tolerated all three drugs very well with only few minor side effects.

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