

# **Statin intolerance: definitions, mechanisms & solutions**

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# Pharmacology of statins

	Increasing lipophilicity						
	Lovastatin	Simvastatin	Atorvastatin	Pitavastatin	Fluvastatin	Rosuvastatin	Pravastatin
IC <sub>50</sub> HMG-CoA reductase (nM)	2–4	1–2 (active metabolite)	1.16	0.1	3–10	0.16	4
Oral absorption (%)	30	60–85	30	80	98	50	35
Bioavailability (%)	5	<5	12	60	30	20	18
Protein binding (%)	>98	>95	>98	96	>98	90	50
Half life (h)	2–5	2–5	7–20	10–13	1–3	20	1–3
Metabolism by CYP450	3A4 (?2C8)	3A4 (2C8, 2D6)	3A4 (2C8)	(2C9)	2C9	2C9 (2C19)	(3A4)
Cellular transporter	OATP1B1	(MRP2)	OATP1B1	OATP1B1 (MRP2)	OATP1B1	OATP1B1	OATP1B1 (MRP2)
Daily dose (mg)	10–40	10–40	10–80	1–4	80 (retard formulation)	5–40	10–40

# Statin Adverse Events

## ● Common side effects

- Headache – Myalgia – Fatigue
- GI intolerance – Flu-like symptoms

## ● Increase in liver enzymes

- Occurs in 0.5 to 2.5% of cases in dose-dependent manner
- Serious liver problems are exceedingly rare
- Manage by reducing statin dose or discontinue until levels return to normal

## ● Myopathy

- Occurs in 0.2 to 0.4% of patients
- Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis
- Reduce by
  - Cautiously using statins in patients with impaired renal function
  - Using the lowest effective dose
  - Cautiously combining statins with fibrates
  - Avoiding drug interactions
  - Careful monitoring of symptoms
- Presence of muscle toxicity requires the discontinuation of the statin

# Statin intolerance

- Statin intolerance is defined as one or more adverse effects associated with statin therapy, which resolves or improves with dose reduction or discontinuation, and can be classified as complete inability to tolerate any dose of a statin or partial intolerance, with inability to tolerate the dose necessary to achieve the patient-specific therapeutic objective. To classify a patient as having statin intolerance, a minimum of two statins should have been attempted, including at least one at the lowest approved daily dosage.

# Statin myopathy

## International Definitions

ACC/AHA (4)	CWG (5)	NLA (6)
Myopathy: any muscle symptom (SAMS)	Myopathy: any muscle symptom	Myalgia: aching, stiffness, cramps
Myalgia: SAMS CK = NL	Symptomatic myalgia Myalgia CK $\leq$ ULN Myositis CK $>$ ULN Rhabdomyolysis CK $>$ 10 $\times$ ULN	Myopathy: weakness Myositis: inflammation Myonecrosis CK 3 $\times$ ULN Mild CK $>$ 3, $<$ 10 $\times$ ULN Moderate CK $>$ 10, $<$ 50 $\times$ ULN Severe CK $>$ 50 $\times$ ULN Clinical rhabdomyolysis CK $>$ ULN and creatinine $>$ 0.5 mg/dl baseline
Myositis: SAMS CK $>$ ULN	HyperCKemia Mild G1 $>$ ULN $\leq$ 5 $\times$ ULN Mild G2 $>$ 5, $\leq$ 10 $\times$ ULN Modest $>$ 10, $\leq$ 50 $\times$ ULN Severe $>$ 50 $\times$ ULN	
Rhabdomyolysis: CK $>$ 10 $\times$ ULN		

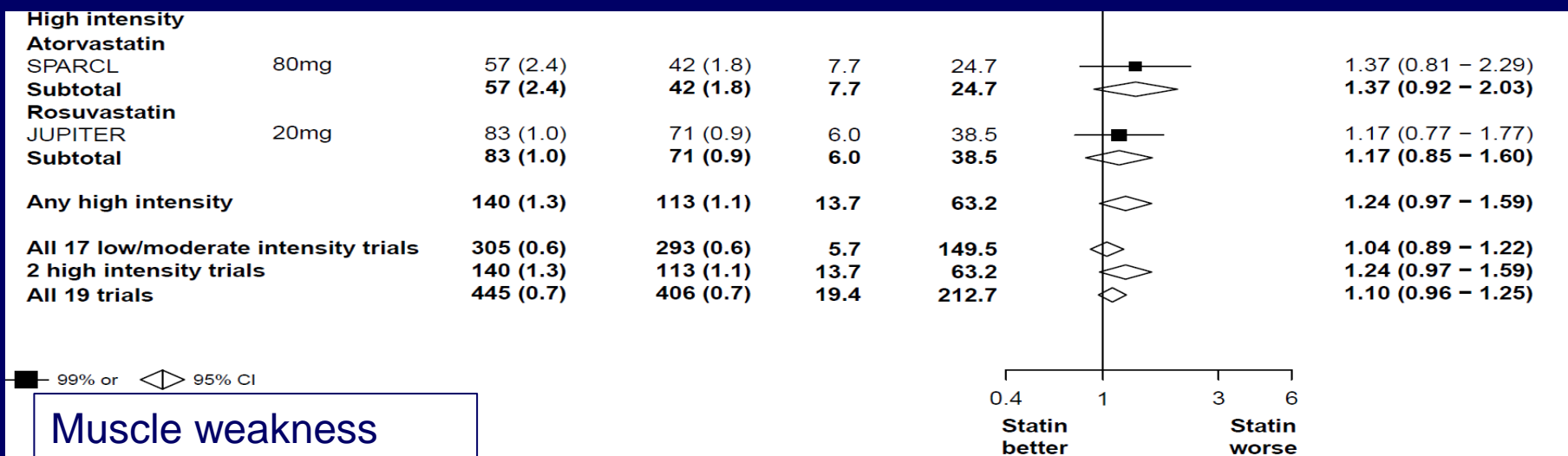
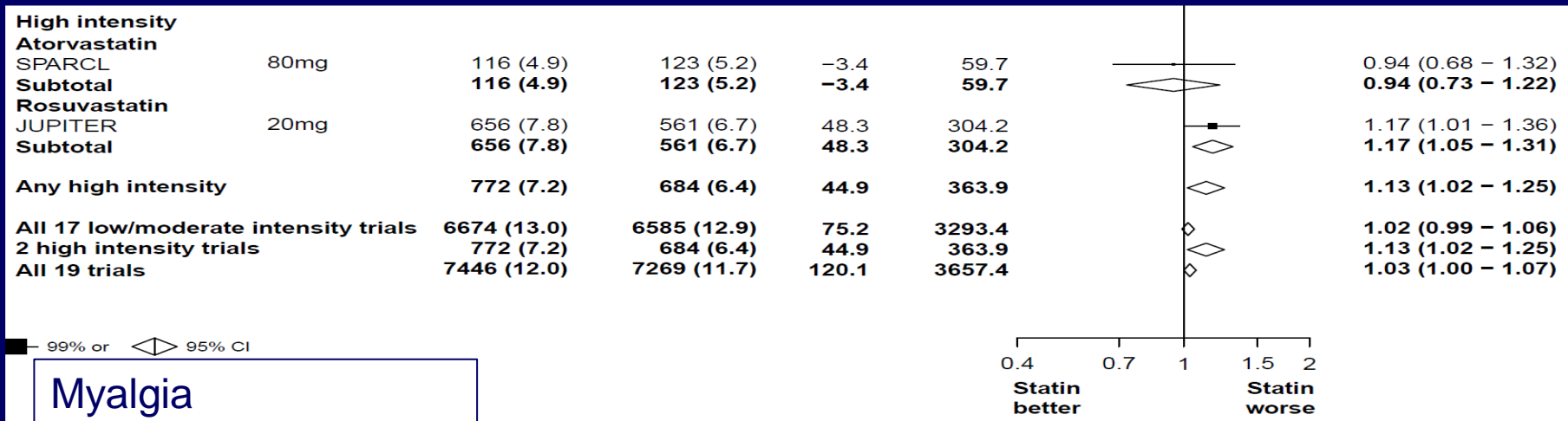
## European Statin-associated myotoxicity grading system

SRM	Classification	Phenotype	Definition
SRM 0		CK elevation $<$ 4 $\times$ ULN	No muscle symptoms
SRM 1		Myalgia, tolerable	Muscle symptoms without CK elevation
SRM 2		Myalgia, intolerable	Muscle symptoms, CK $<$ 4 $\times$ ULN, complete resolution on dechallenge
SRM 3		Myopathy	CK elevation $>$ 4 $\times$ ULN $<$ 10 $\times$ ULN $\pm$ muscle symptoms, complete resolution on dechallenge
SRM 4		Severe myopathy	CK elevation $>$ 10 $\times$ ULN $<$ 50 $\times$ ULN, muscle symptoms, complete resolution on dechallenge
SRM 5		Rhabdomyolysis	CK elevation $>$ 10 $\times$ ULN with evidence of renal impairment + muscle symptoms or CK $<$ 50 $\times$ ULN
SRM 6		Autoimmune-mediated necrotizing myositis	HMGR antibodies, HMGR expression in muscle biopsy, incomplete resolution on dechallenge

Thompson PD et al; JACC 2016; 67: 2395

Alfirevic A et al; Clin Pharm Ther 2014; 96: 470

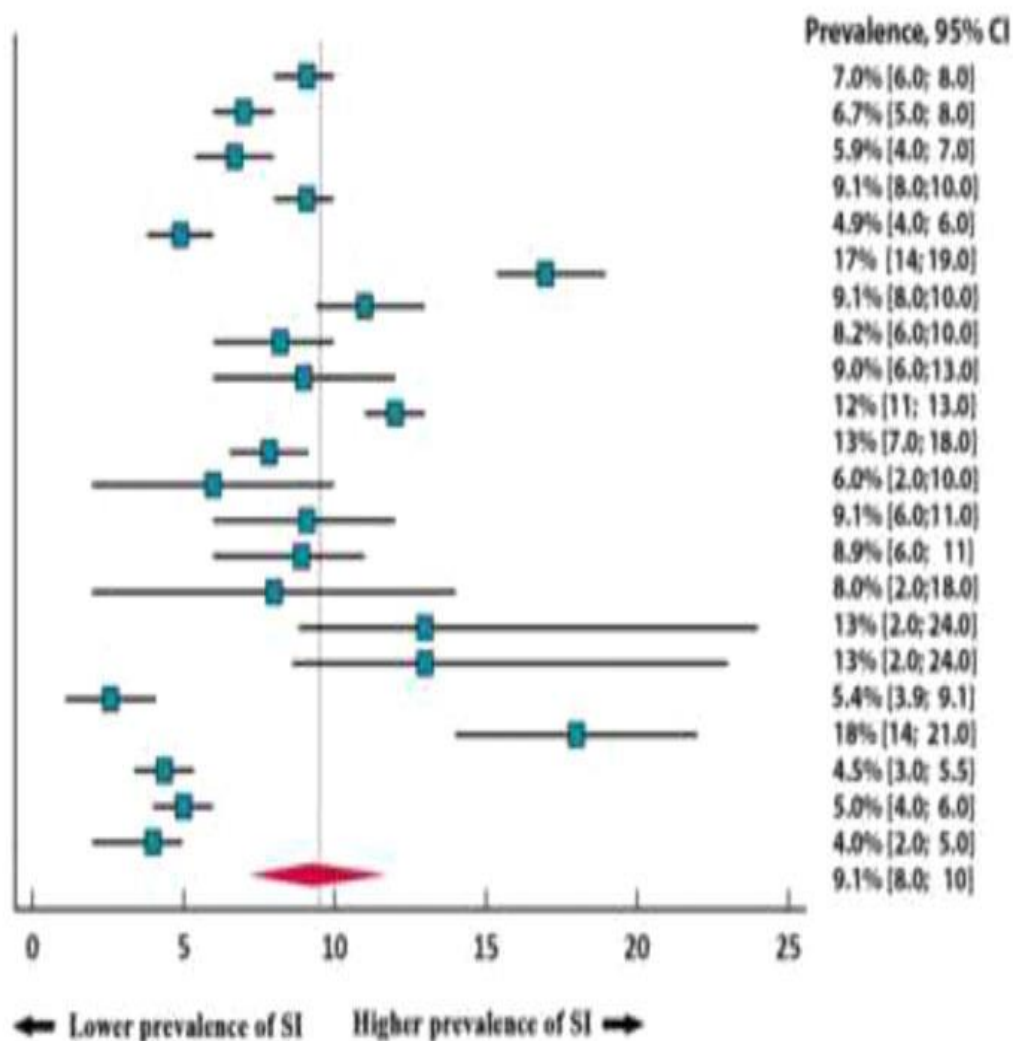
# Cholesterol Treatment Trialists: adverse effects



# Statin intolerance: prevalence

## Summary of SI prevalence

SI definition	No. of studies	Population
*NLA	122	1,102,559
*ILEP	109	457,009
*EAS	108	407,509
Type of studies	176	4,143,517
*RCTs	112	195,575
*Cohort	62	3,947,942
Disease prevention	176	4,143,517
*Primary	93	1,726,384
**Primary hypercholesterolemia	21	14,663
**Hypercholesterolemia	22	114,585
**Dyslipidemia	27	744,169
**DM	14	331,061
*Secondary	54	1,166,745
**Coronary artery disease	36	1,008,567
sCAD	13	51,5581
ACS	11	146,788
MI	12	346,198
**Stroke/TIA	9	158,178
*Combined (Primary and Secondary)	35	1,251,039
Lipophilicity	126	226,863
*Lipophilic	82	158,924
*Hydrophilic	44	67,939
Overall prevalence	176	4,143,517



# Risk factors for statin myopathy

## Patient-related

Advanced age  
Female sex  
Small body frame and frailty  
Multisystem disease (particularly involvement of liver, kidney, or both)  
Hypothyroidism  
Alcoholism  
Grapefruit juice consumption (>1 qt/d)  
Major surgery or perioperative period  
Excessive physical activity  
History of myopathy while receiving another lipid-lowering therapy  
History of creatine kinase elevation  
Unexplained cramps  
Family history of myopathy  
Family history of myopathy while receiving lipid-lowering therapy

## Treatment-related

High-dose statin therapy  
Interactions with concomitant drugs  
Fibrates  
Cyclosporine  
Antifungals  
Macrolide antibiotics  
HIV protease inhibitors  
Nefazodone  
Amlodarone  
Verapamil



# Statin-induced myalgia or myopathy?

## Myalgia/Myositis

### Muscle symptoms

- Physical exertion (particularly in unaccustomed individuals)
- Viral illness
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Hypo- or hyperthyroidism
- The Cushing syndrome or adrenal insufficiency
- Hypoparathyroidism
- Fibromyalgia
- Polymyalgia rheumatica
- Polymyositis
- Systemic lupus erythematosus
- Tendon or joint disorder
- Trauma
- Seizures or severe chills
- Peripheral arterial disease†
- Medications
  - Glucocorticoids
  - Antipsychotics
  - Antiretroviral drugs
  - Illicit drugs (cocaine or amphetamines)

## Creatine kinase elevation

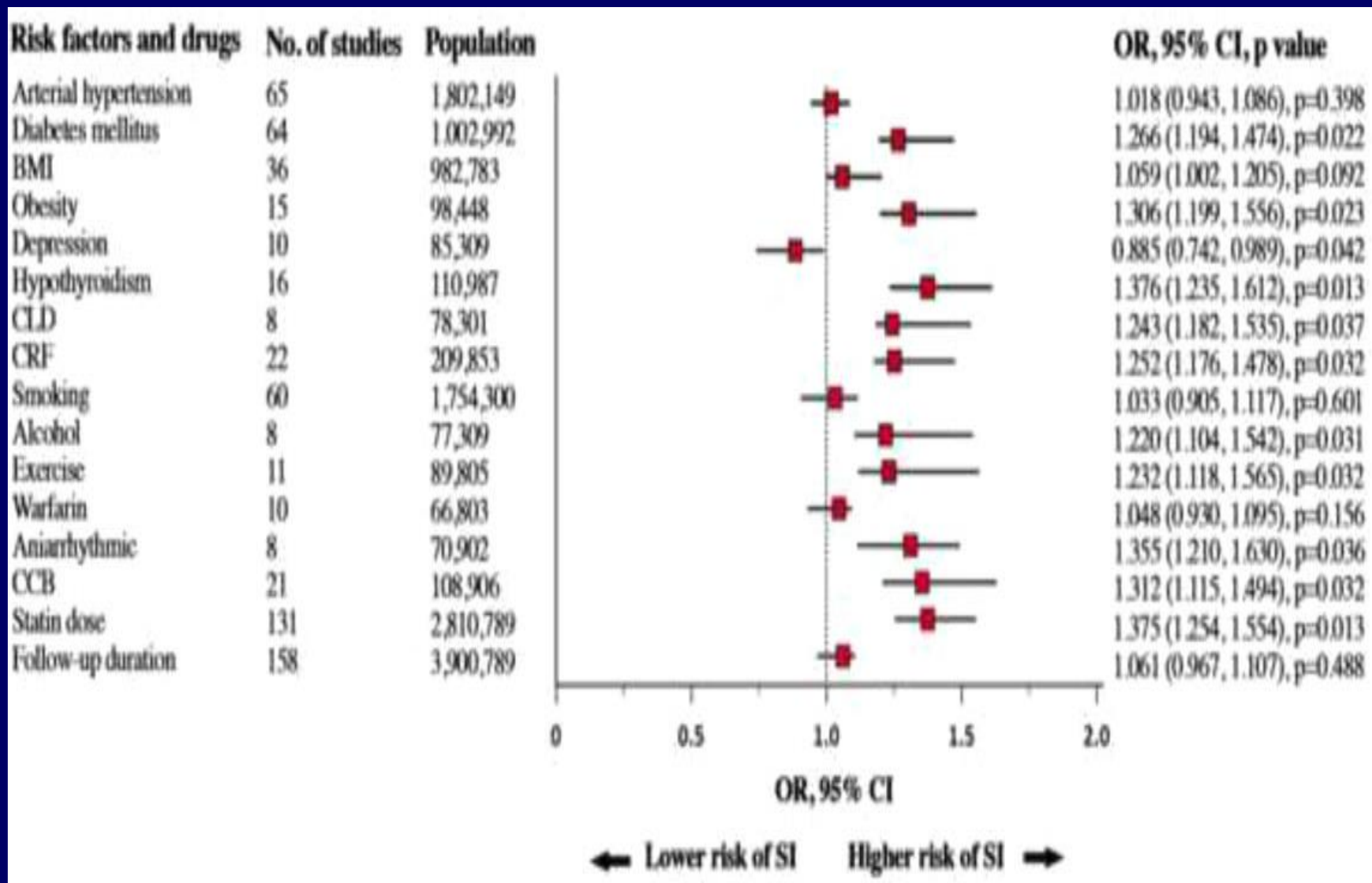
### Creatine kinase elevations

- Physical exertion
- Hypothyroidism
- Metabolic or inflammatory myopathies
- Alcoholism
- Neuropathy or radiculopathy
- Ethnicity (black Americans may have elevated baseline creatine kinase levels)
- Idiopathic hyperCKemia‡
- Seizure or severe chills
- Trauma
- Medications
  - Illicit drugs (cocaine or amphetamines)
  - Antipsychotics

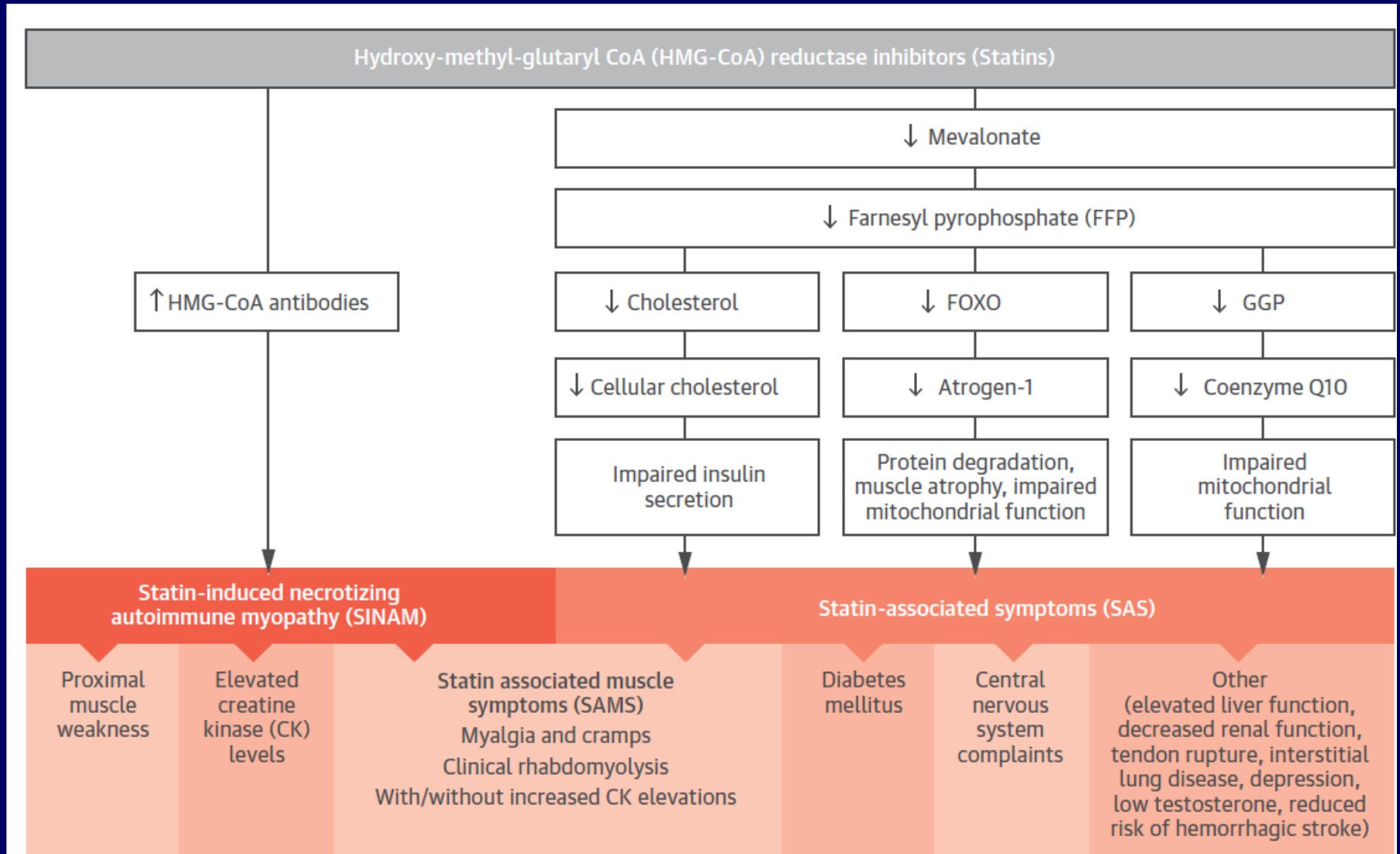
Joy TR & Hegele RA. Ann Intern Med 2009; 150 : 858

Kim E & Wierzbicki AS. BMJ. 2021; 373 : n1486

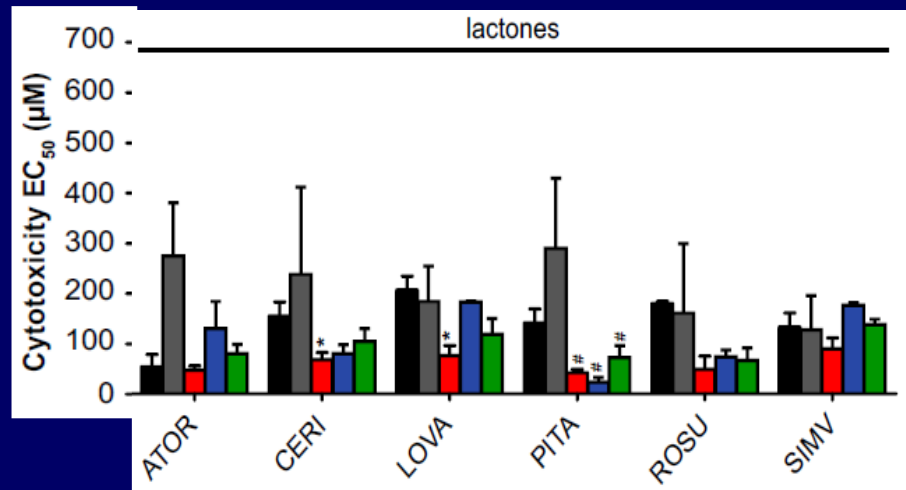
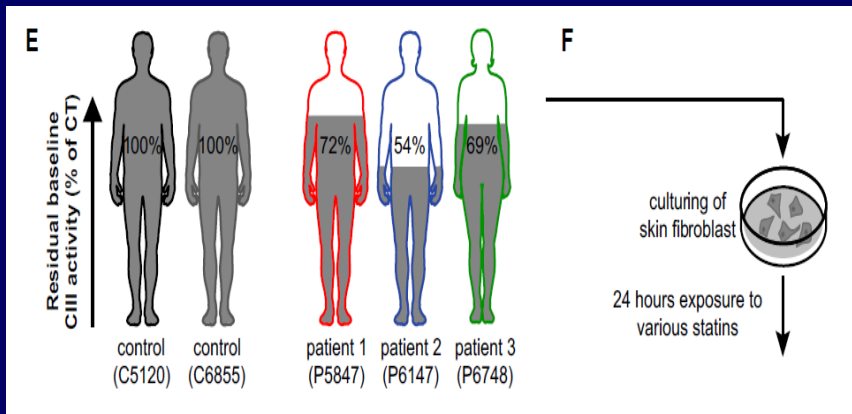
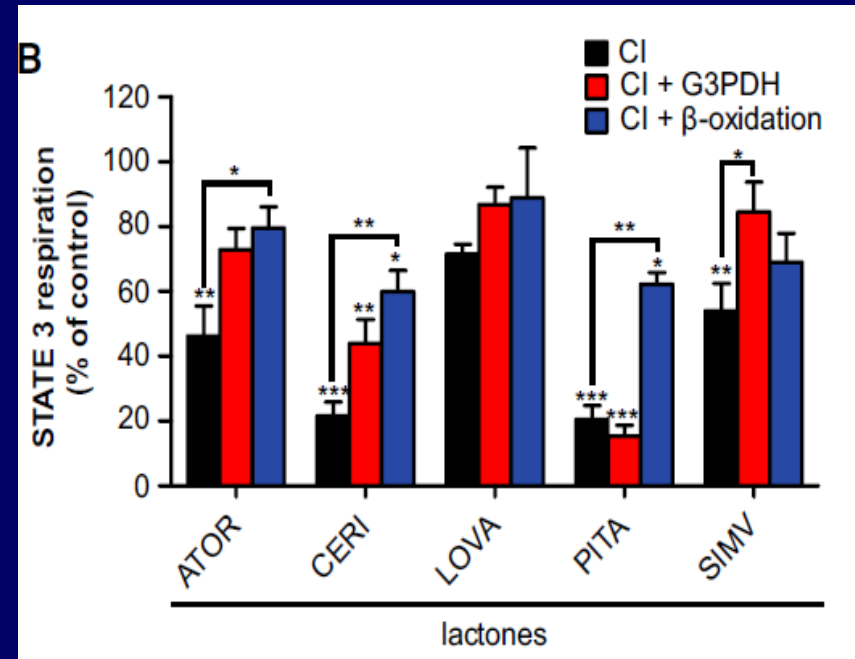
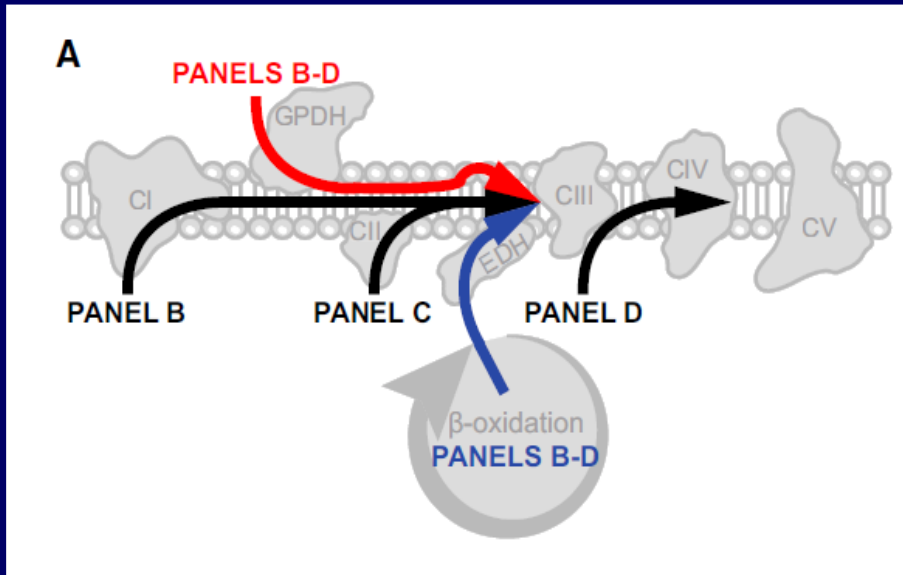
# Statin intolerance: risk factors



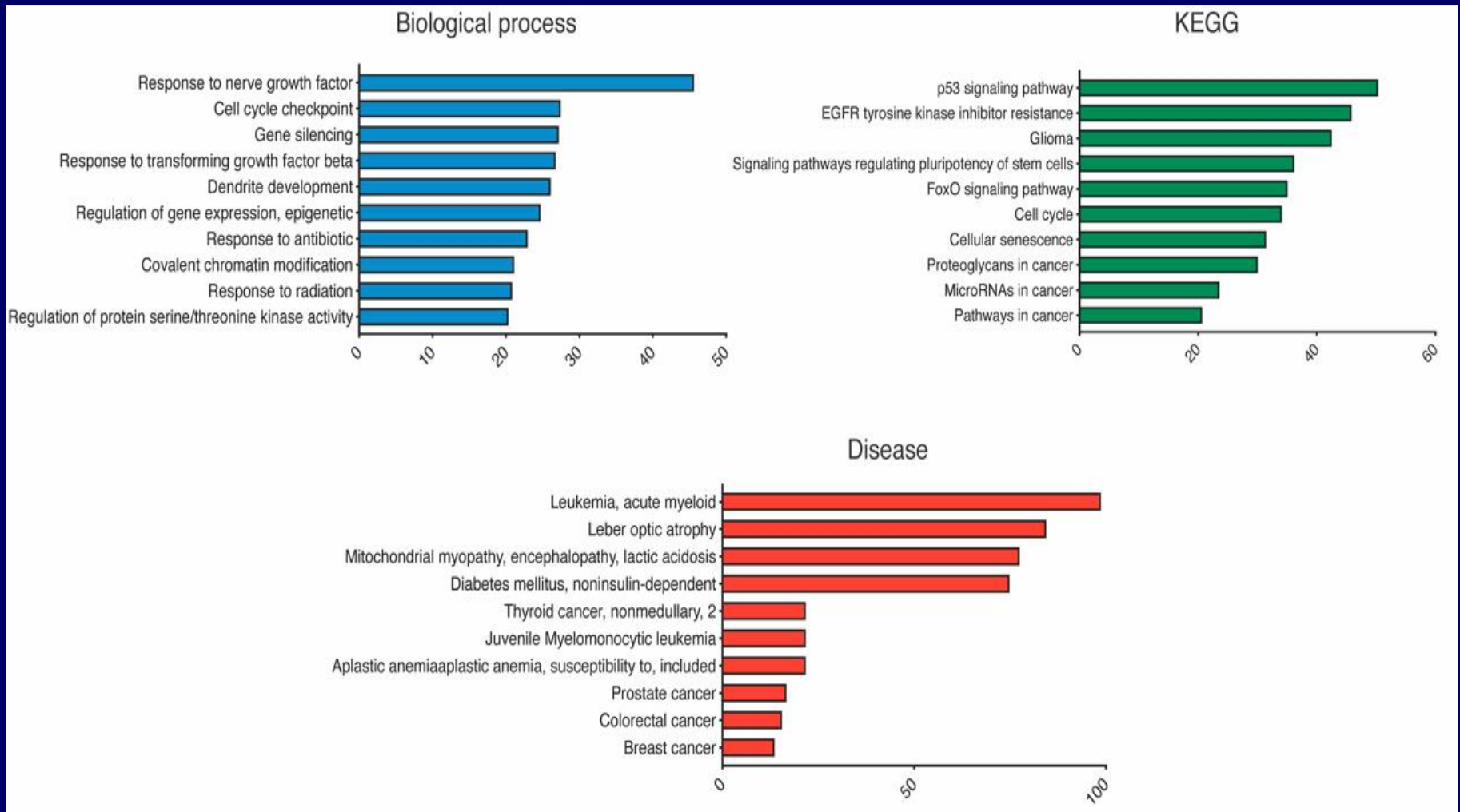
# Mechanisms of statin myopathy



# Statin myopathy- a mitochondrial complex 3 problem

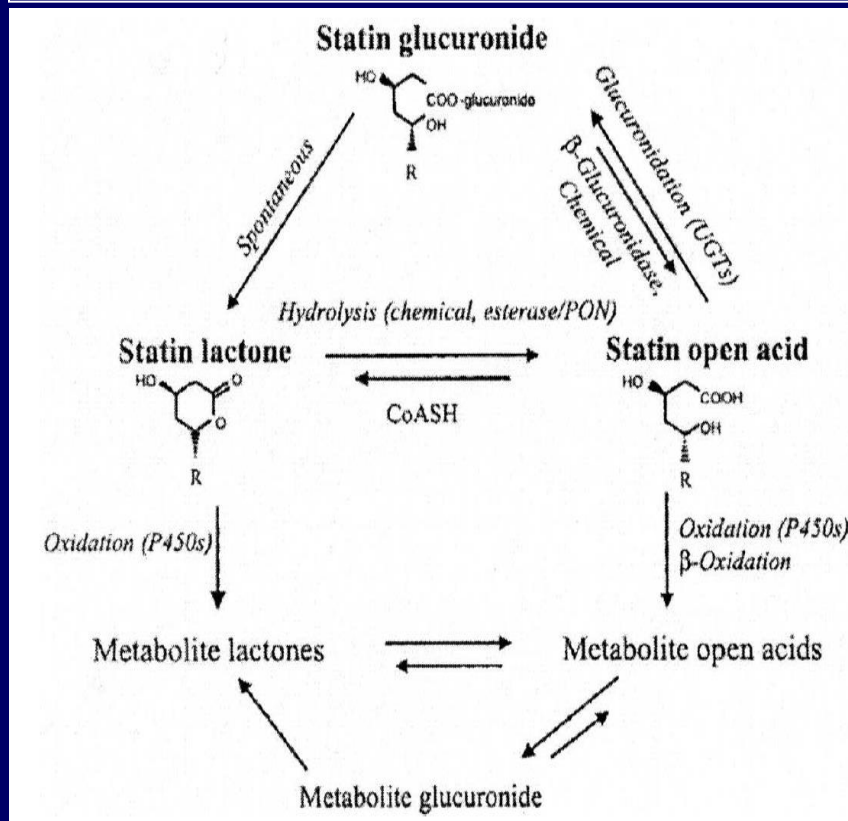


# Statin intolerance: microRNA signature profiles

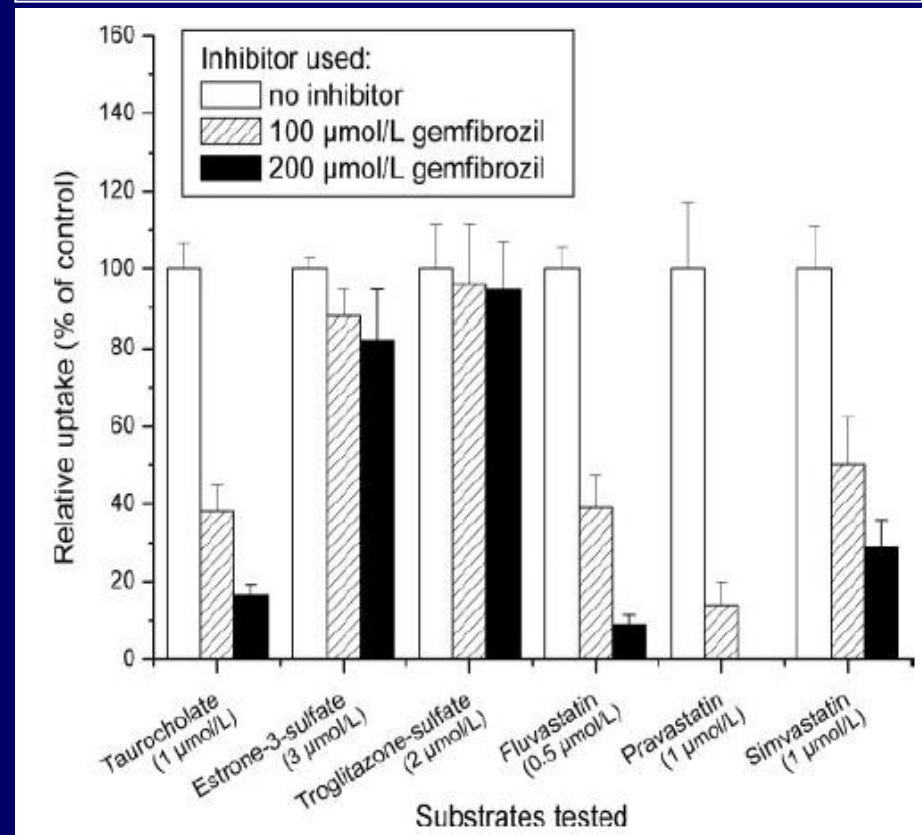


# Statin interaction mechanisms

## Statin metabolic pathway

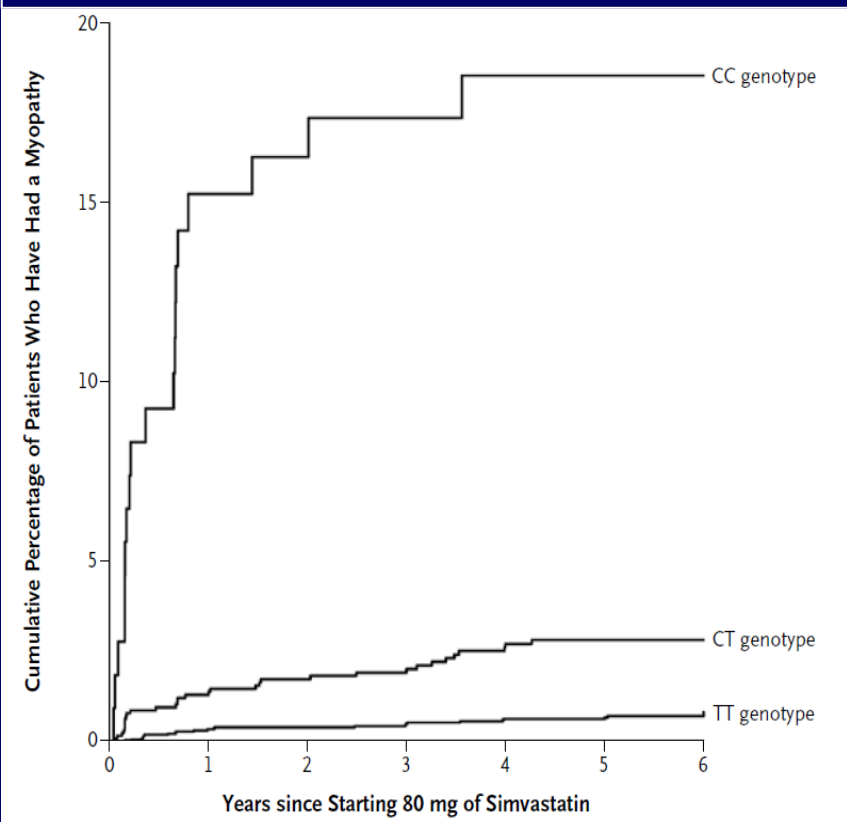


## OAT1B1 transporter interactions



# Statin pharmacogenetics: SLC01B1

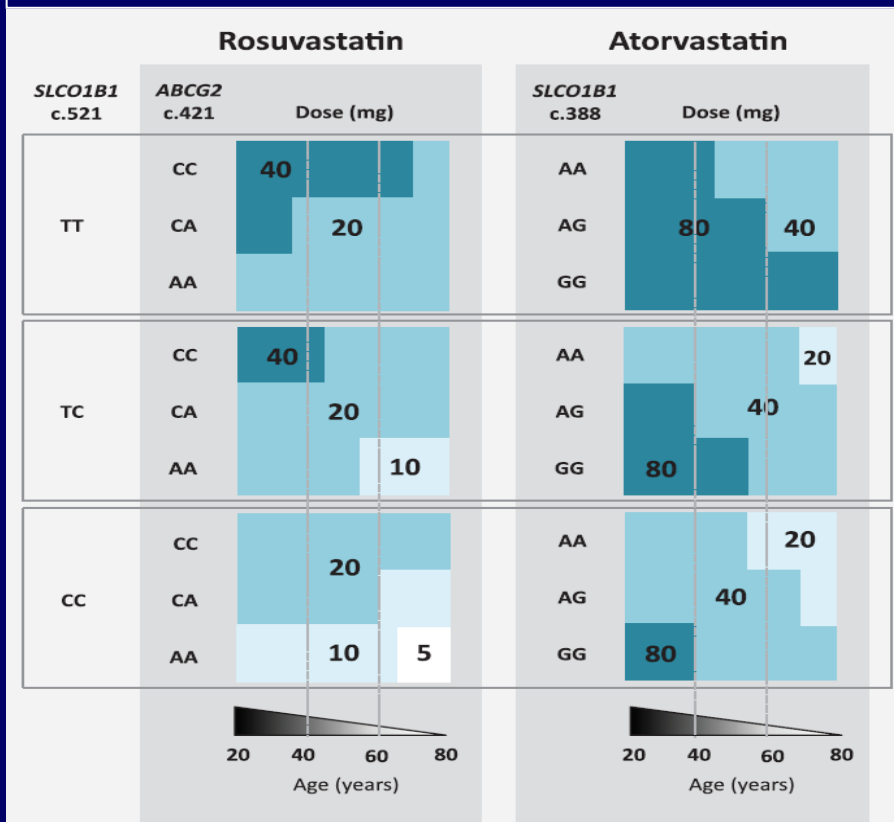
## Simvastatin 80mg (diltiazem/CCB)-risk



N=12455

SEARCH group; NEJM 2008; 359 : 789  
De Gorter MK et al. Circ CV Genet 2013; 6: 400

## SLC01B1 algorithm: Rosuva- & Atorva-statin



N=299; 45-fold variation in statin concentration. 50% @90<sup>th</sup> centile

# Managing statin intolerance

## Statin intolerance score

### Regarding this statin regimen:

A. Location and pattern of muscle symptoms (If more than one category applies, record the highest number.) **Enter score:**

Symmetric, hip flexors or thighs	3	<input type="text"/>
Symmetric, calves	2	
Symmetric, proximal upper extremity	2	
Asymmetric, intermittent, or not specific to any area	1	
	1	

B. Timing of muscle symptom onset in relation to starting statin regimen

<4 weeks	3	<input type="text"/>
4-12 weeks	2	
>12 weeks	1	

C. Timing of muscle symptom improvement after withdrawal of statin (If patient is still taking statin, stop regimen and monitor symptoms.)

<2 weeks	2	<input type="text"/>
2-4 weeks	1	
No improvement after 4 weeks	0	

Rechallenge the patient with a statin regimen, (even if same statin compound or regimen as above) then complete final question:

D. Timing of recurrence of similar muscle symptoms in relation to starting second regimen

<4 weeks	3	<input type="text"/>
4-12 weeks	1	
>12 weeks or similar symptoms did not reoccur	0	

**Total:**  
All four scores above must be entered before totaling

### Regarding this statin regimen before the most recent regimen:

A. Location and pattern of muscle symptoms (If more than one category applies, record the highest number.) **Enter score:**

Symmetric, hip flexors or thighs	3	<input type="text"/>
Symmetric, calves	2	
Symmetric, proximal upper extremity	2	
Asymmetric, intermittent, or not specific to any area	1	
	1	

B. Timing of muscle symptom onset in relation to starting statin regimen

<4 weeks	3	<input type="text"/>
4-12 weeks	2	
>12 weeks	1	

C. Timing of muscle symptom improvement after withdrawal of statin

<2 weeks	2	<input type="text"/>
2-4 weeks	1	
No improvement after 4 weeks	0	

Regarding the most recent statin regimen: (even if same statin compound as above)

D. Timing of recurrence of similar muscle symptoms in relation to starting regimen

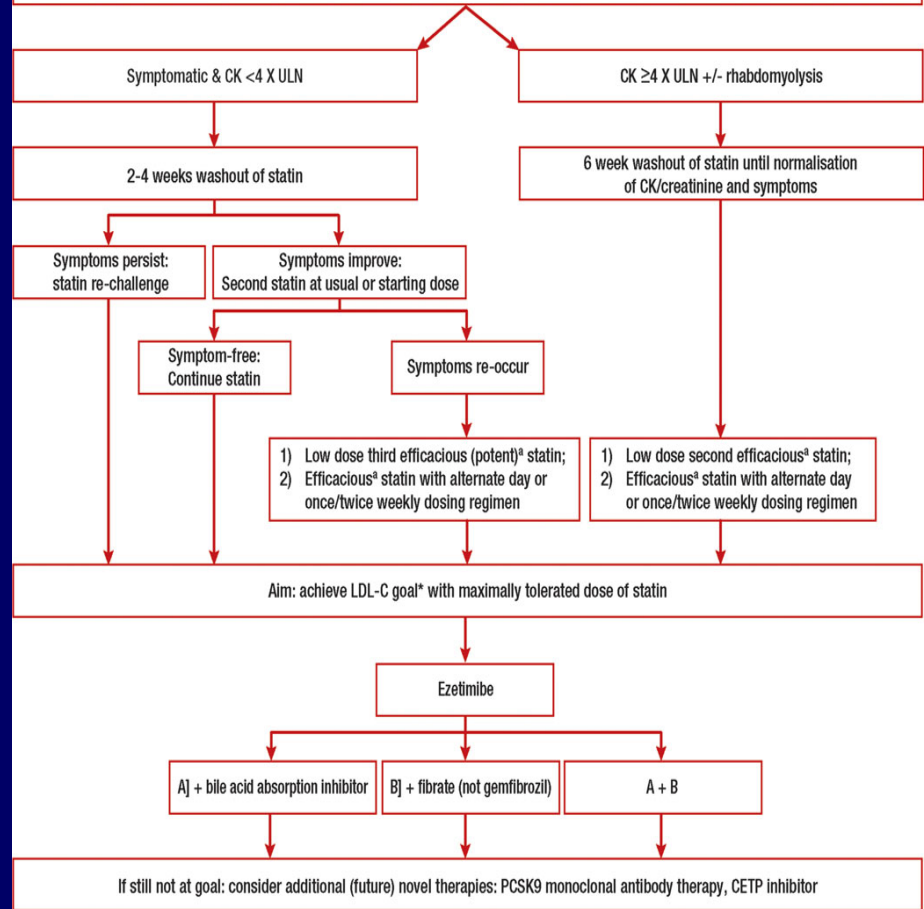
<4 weeks	3	<input type="text"/>
4-12 weeks	1	
>12 weeks or similar symptoms did not reoccur	0	

**Total:**  
All four scores above must be entered before totaling

	Total score:	2-6	7-8	9-11
Interpretation	Likelihood that the patient's muscle symptoms are due to statin use:	Unlikely	Possible	Probable

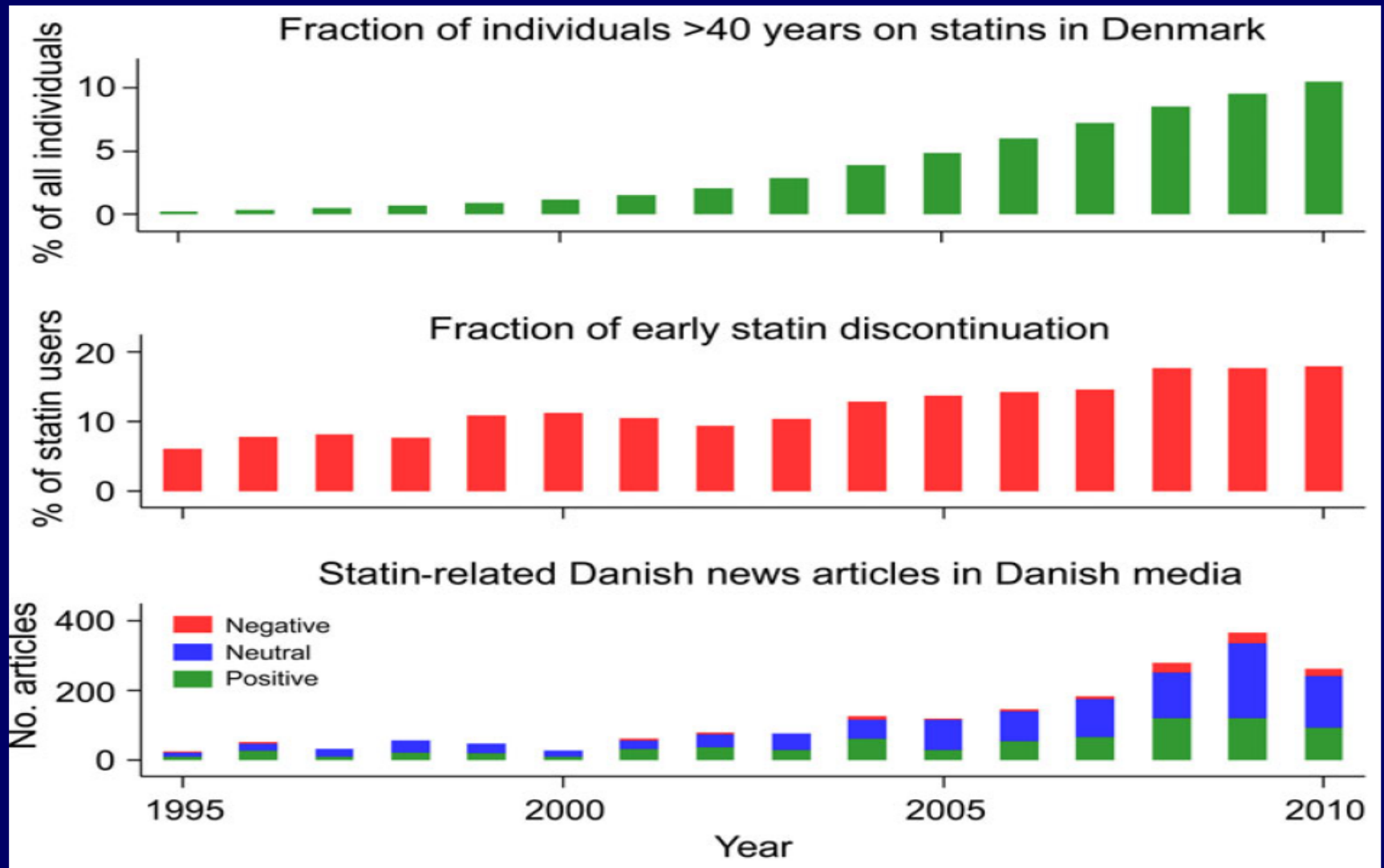
## Intolerance treatment

Consider if statin-attributed muscle symptoms favour statin continuation / reinitiation

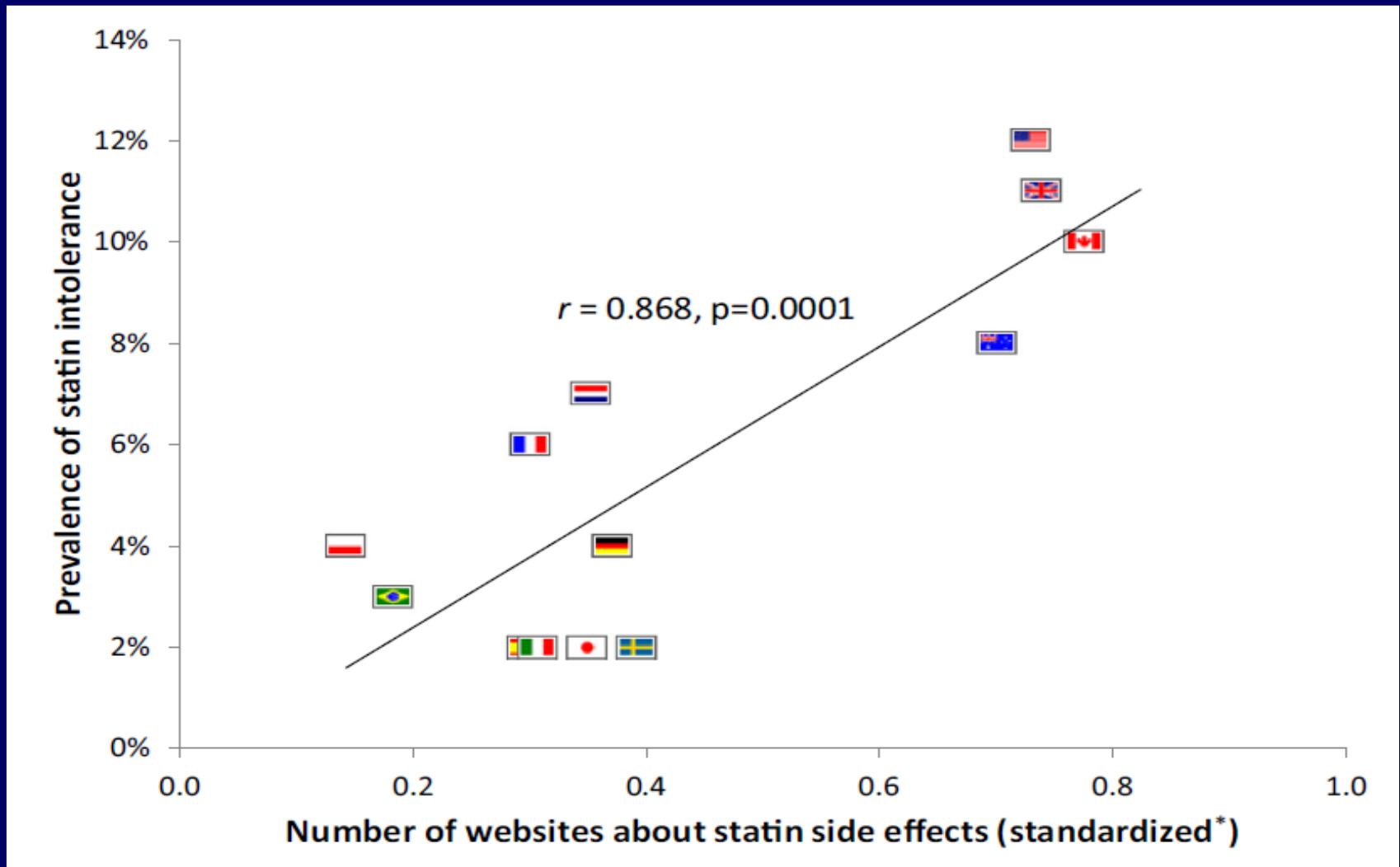




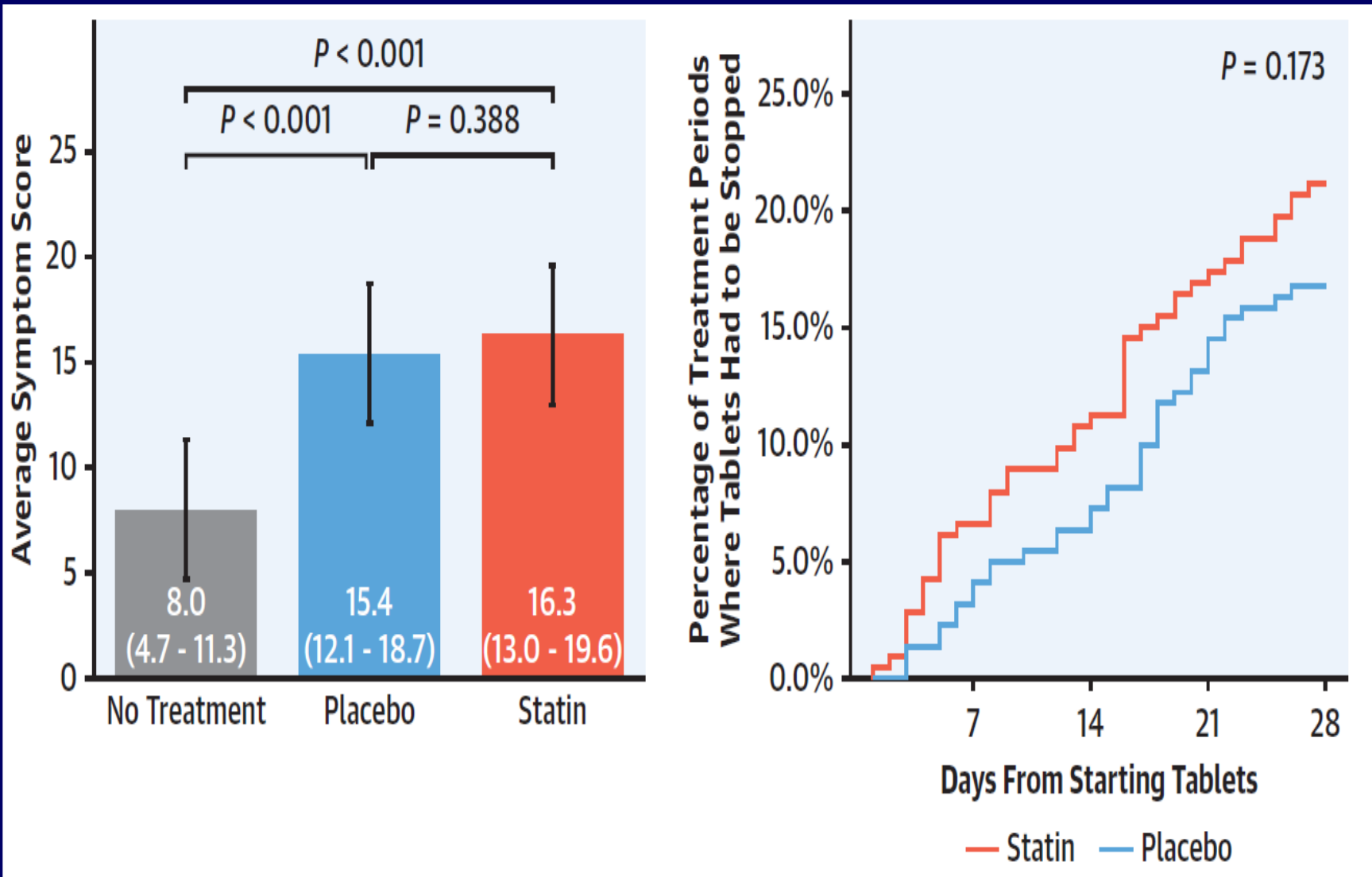
# Statins & the media



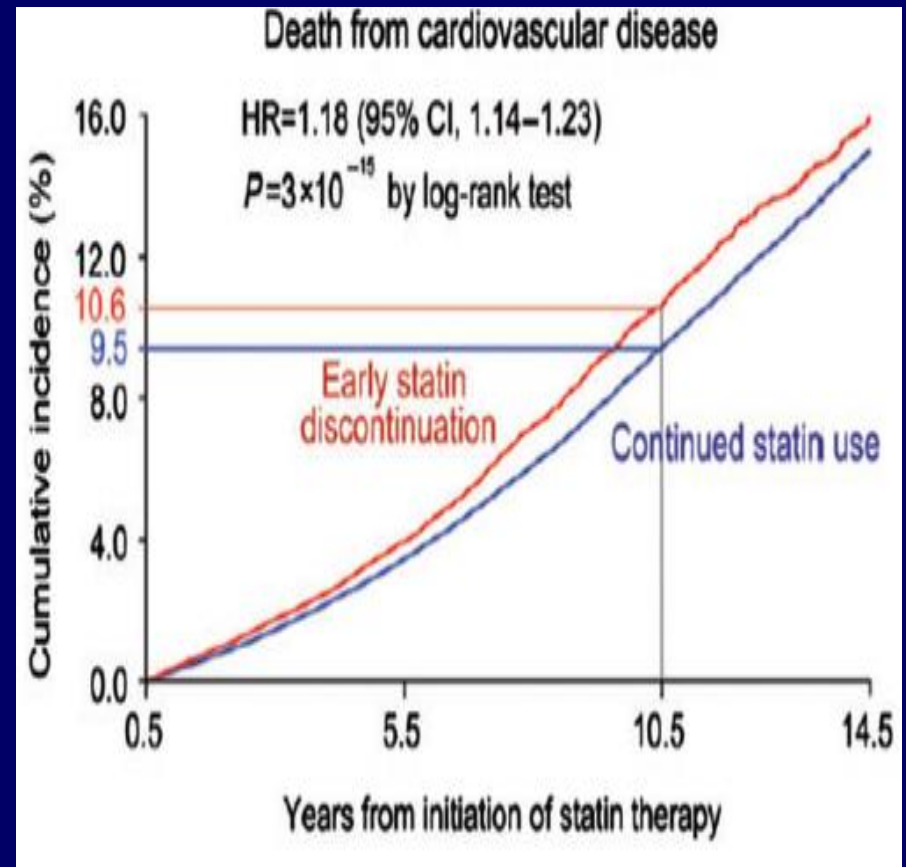
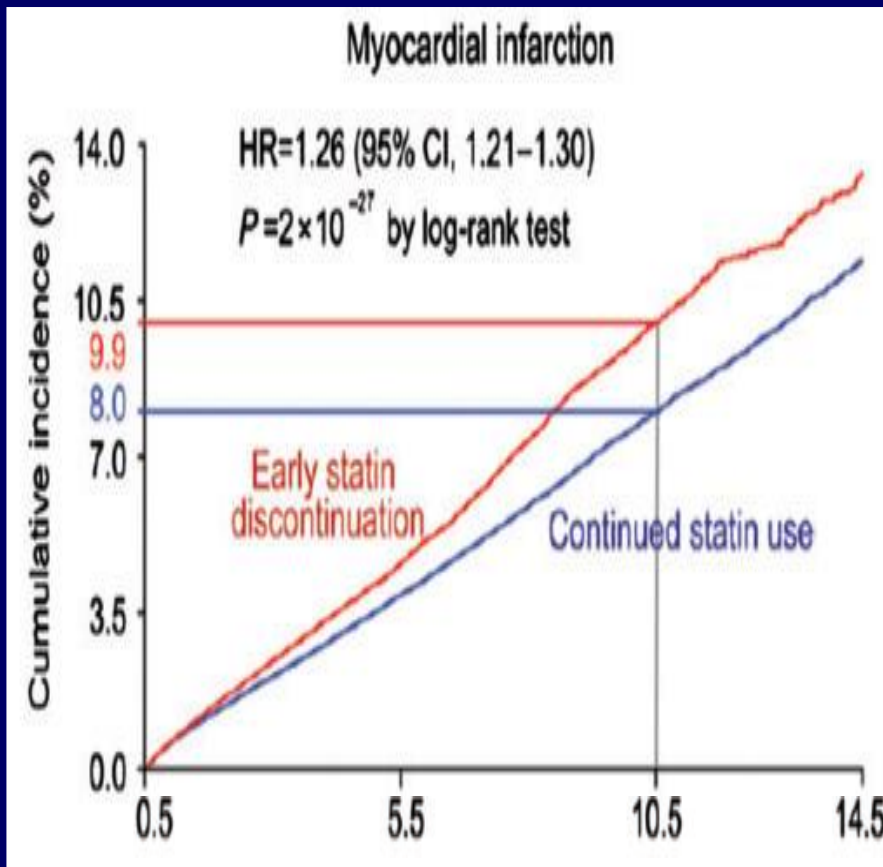
# Statins & the internet



# Statin nocebo effect



# Statin discontinuation - consequences



# MEGA study

## Characteristics (n=7832)

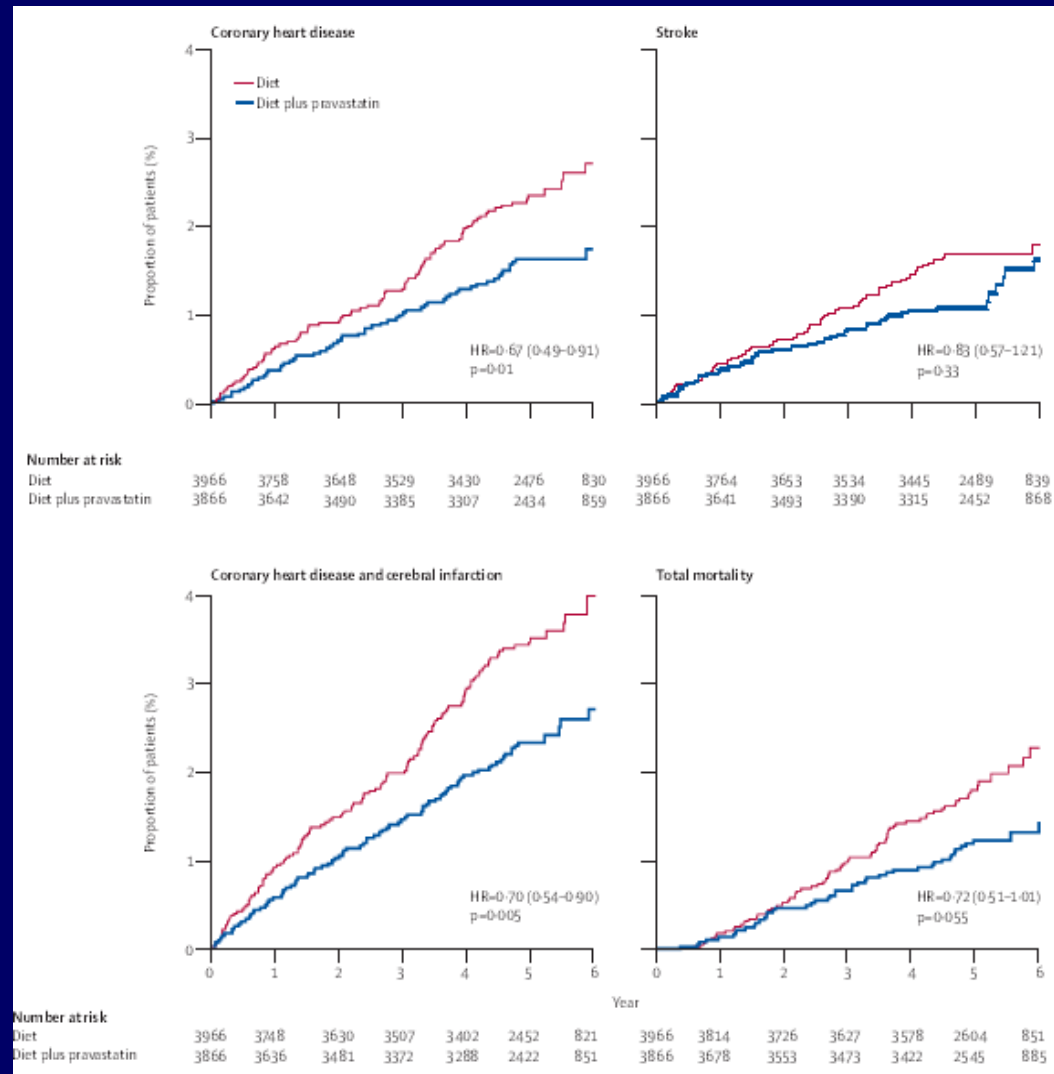
- Age 58±7
- Male 31%
- BP 132±17/79±10mmHg
- DM 21%

TC 6.27±0.31mM  
 TG 1.44 (1.07-2.02) mM  
 HDL 1.49±0.39mM  
 LDL 4.05±0.45mM

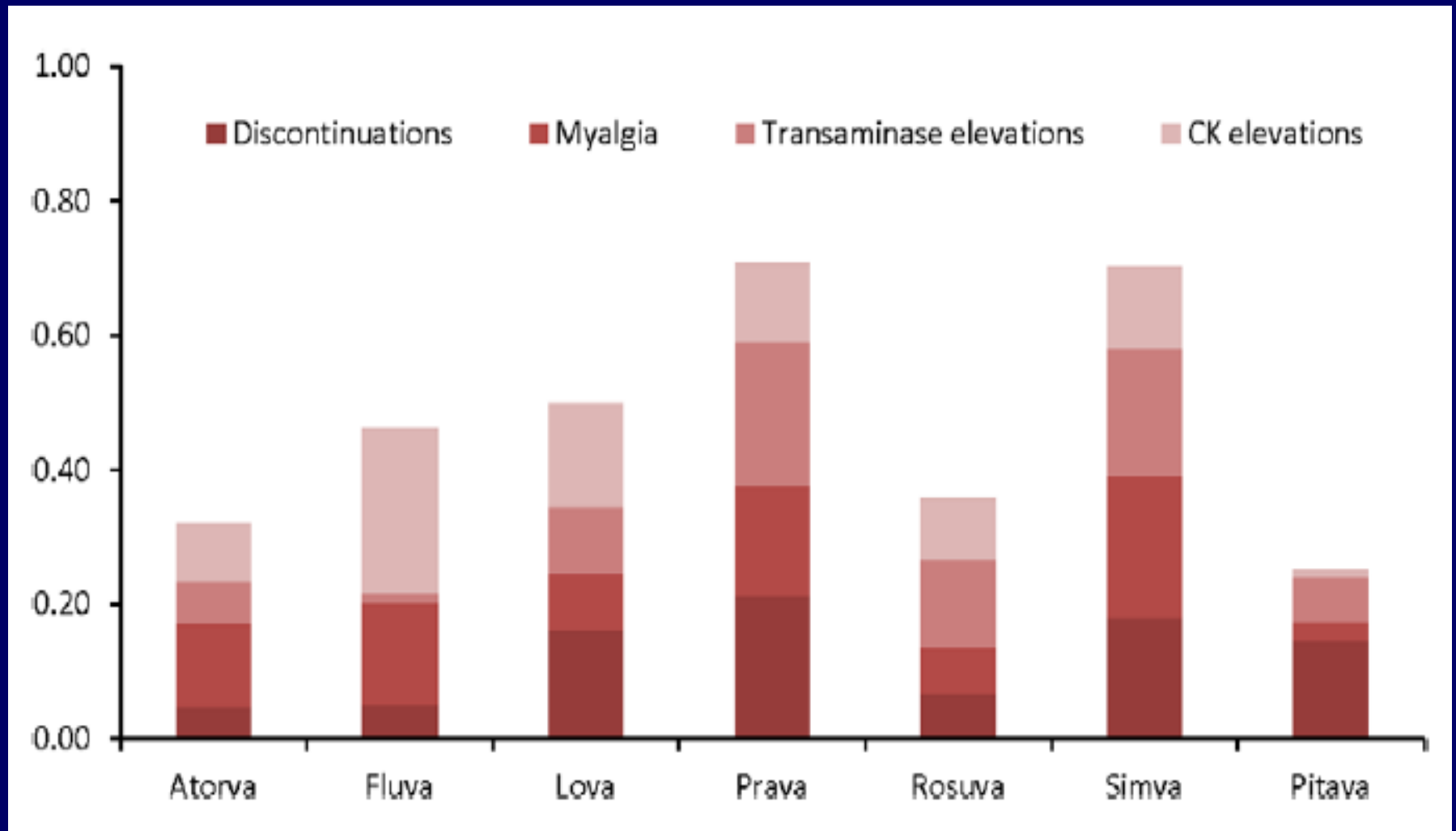
- Aspirin 1%
- BP drug 39%

CHD risk 5% @ 10 years

- Randomised pravastatin 10-20mg vs. placebo
  - Average dose 10.6mg for 10 yrs

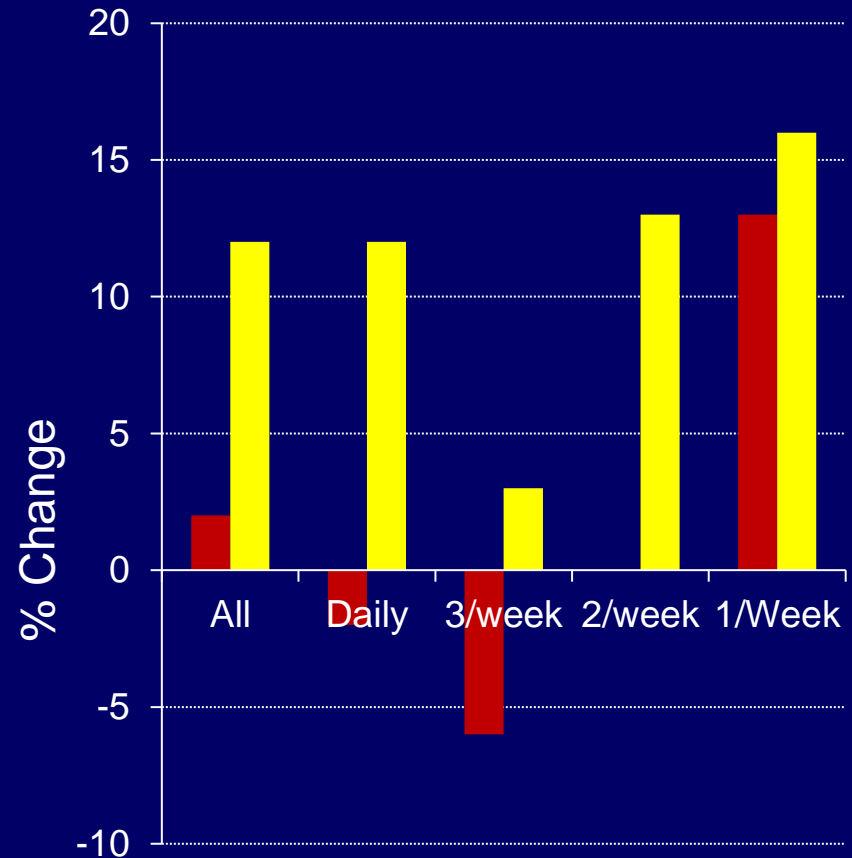
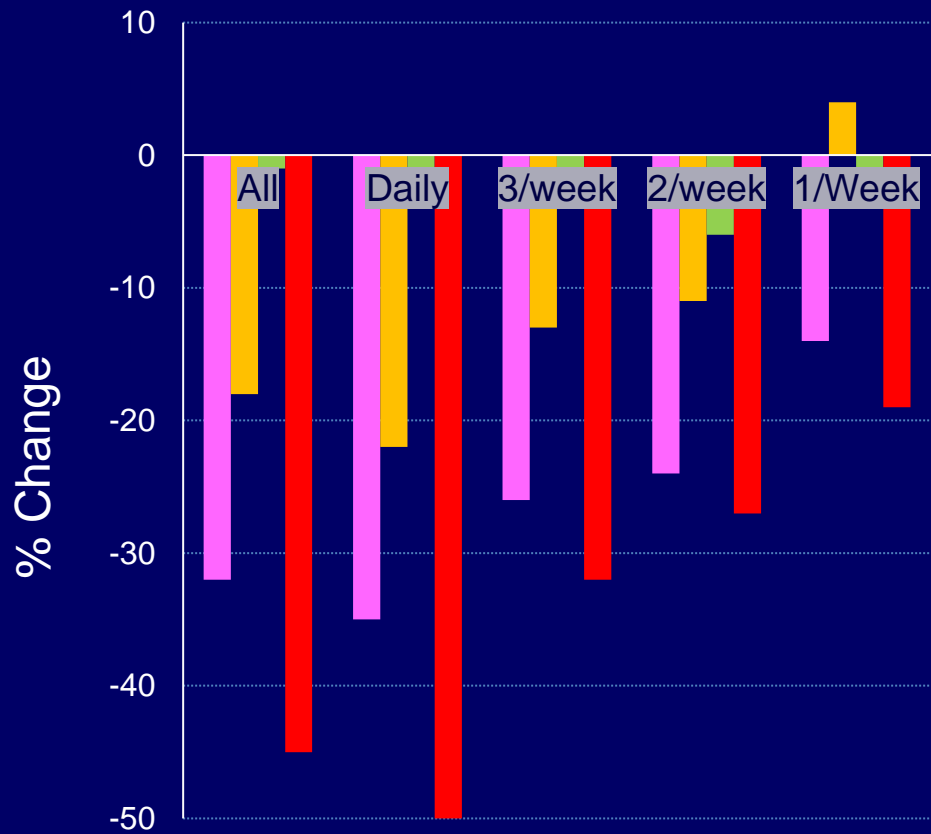


# Predicting the best statin to use



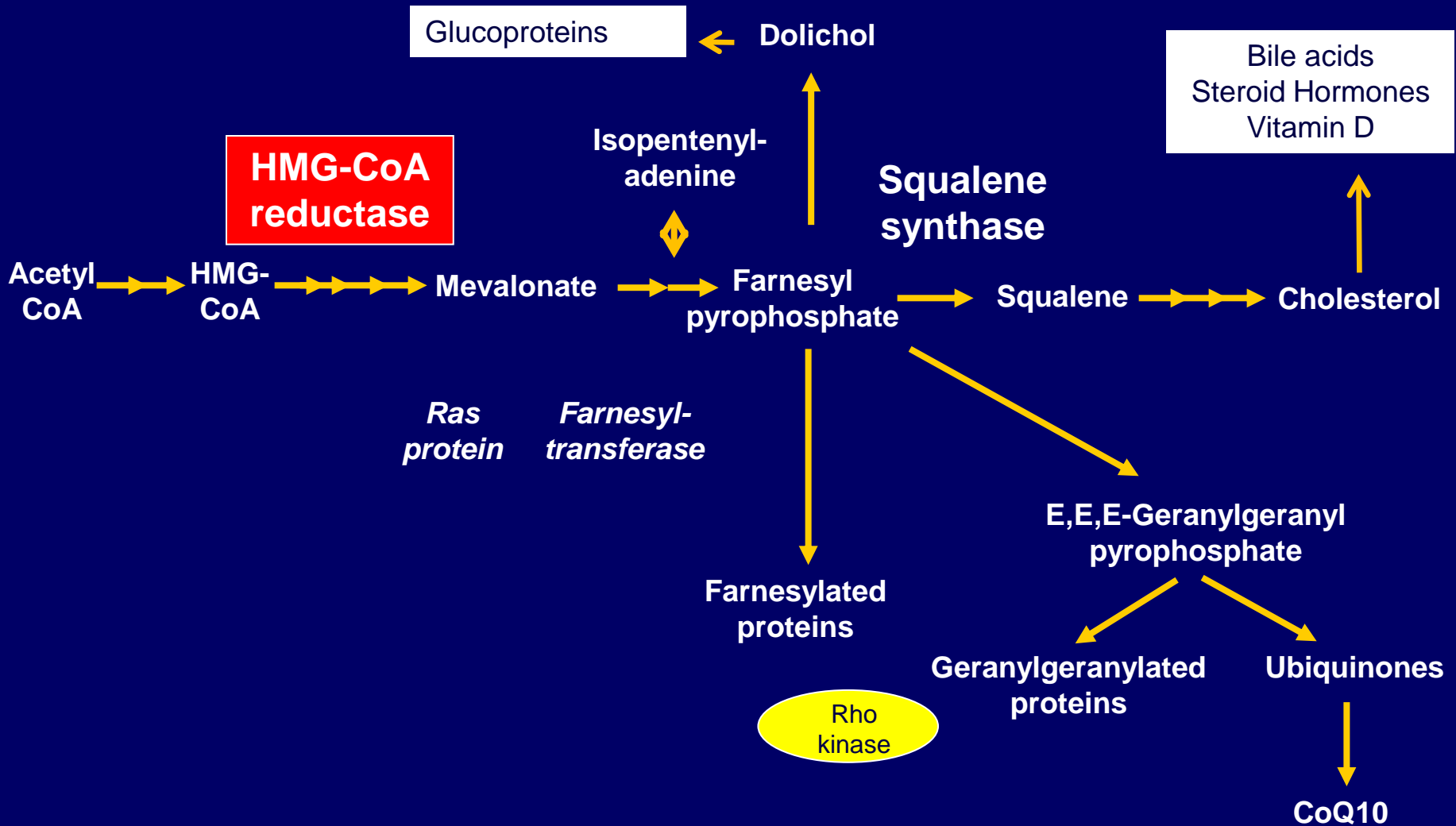
Trials =135; n=246955

# Intermittent dosing of rosuvastatin 5mg in previously intolerant patients



N=325

# Cholesterol Biosynthetic Pathway





# Statins & CoQ<sub>10</sub> Supplementation

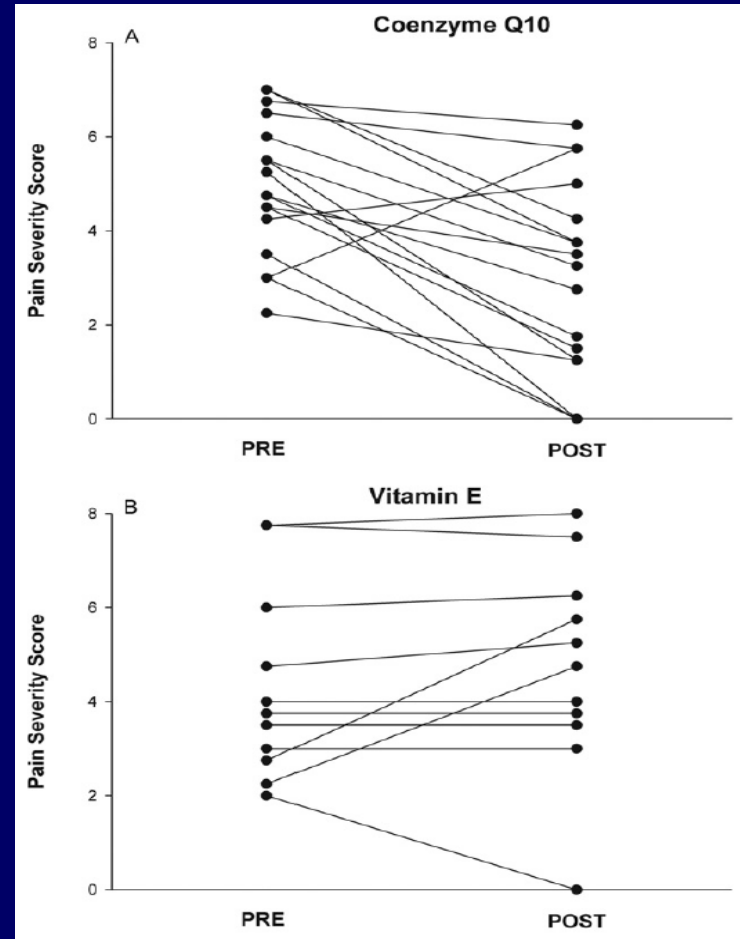
First author (reference)	CoQ10 dose, duration	Statin type/dose	SAMS assessment	Muscle outcome
Caso [33]	100 mg/day, 30 d	Variety	Self-report	↓ Muscle pain
Young [34]	200 mg/d, 12 wk	S 10–40 mg	Self-report	↔ Pain, statin tolerance
Bookstaver [35]	60 mg/2 × d, 3 mo	Variety	Self-report	↔ Pain at 1 month
Bogsrud [36]	400 mg/d, 12 wk <sup>a</sup>	A 10 mg	Self-report	↔ Symptoms or function
Fedacko [3]	200 mg/d, 3 mo	Variety	Self-report	↓ Muscle pain, SAMS cases
Skarlovnik [39]	50 mg/2 × d, 30 d	Variety	Dechallenge/rechallenge	↓ Muscle pain, symptoms
Taylor [40]	600 mg/d, 8 wk	S 20 mg	Placebo/statin trial	↔ Muscle pain, SAMS cases
Buettner [41]	300 mg/2 × d, 4 wk	Variety	Dechallenge/rechallenge	↔ SAMS cases, mitochondrial function

# Statin myopathy and CoQ10 supplementation

Characteristics, plasma lipid profile, and creatine kinase (CK) concentration of subjects in the coenzyme Q10 and vitamin E groups

Variable	Coenzyme Q10 (n = 18)	Vitamin E (n = 14)
Women/men	6/12	9/5
Age (yrs)	58 ± 3	64 ± 2
Height (m)	1.70 ± 0.03	1.65 ± 0.03
Weight (kg)	84.0 ± 3.5	86.1 ± 5.8
Body mass index (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	28.1 ± 1.0	29.8 ± 1.7
Triglycerides (mg/dl)	196 ± 30	155 ± 18
Cholesterol (mg/dl)	183 ± 10	189 ± 14
LDL cholesterol (mg/dl)	96 ± 3	115 ± 13
CK (U/L)	129 ± 15	133 ± 37

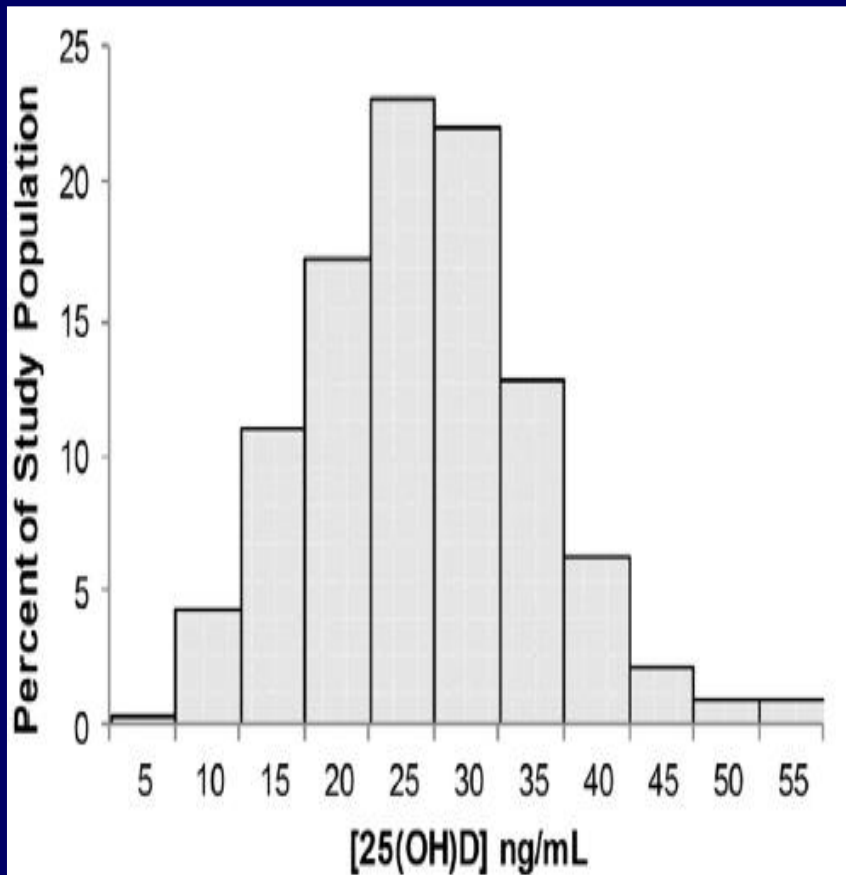
Data expressed as mean ± SEM.



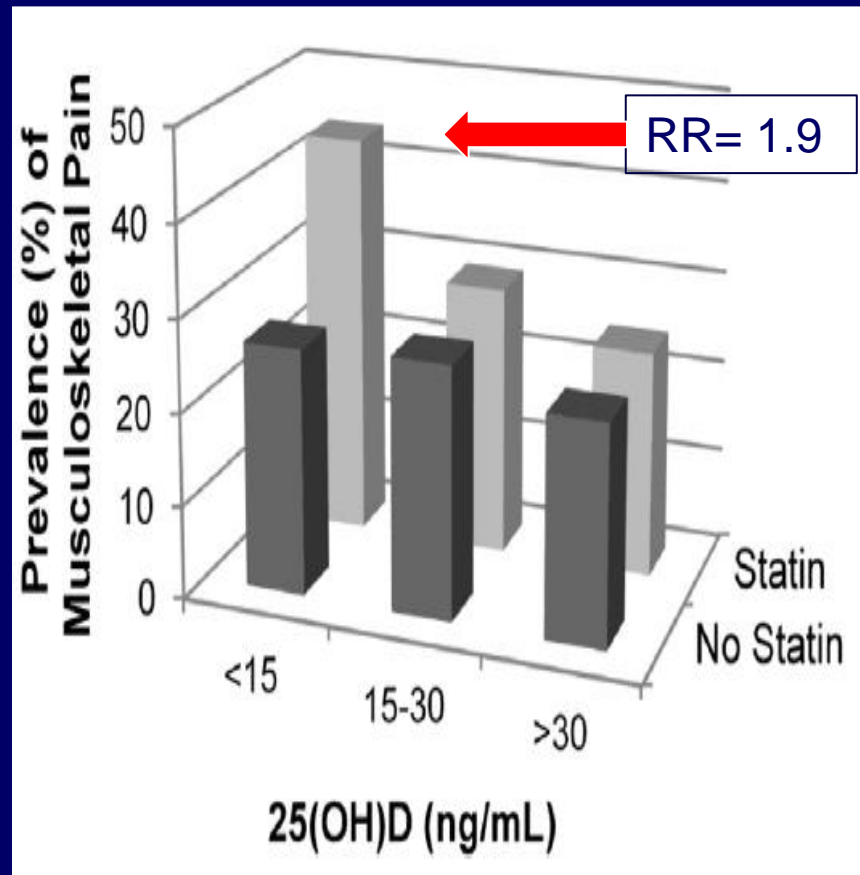
Pain severity ↓40% p<0.001

# Statins & vitamin D

## Vitamin D distribution



## NHANES

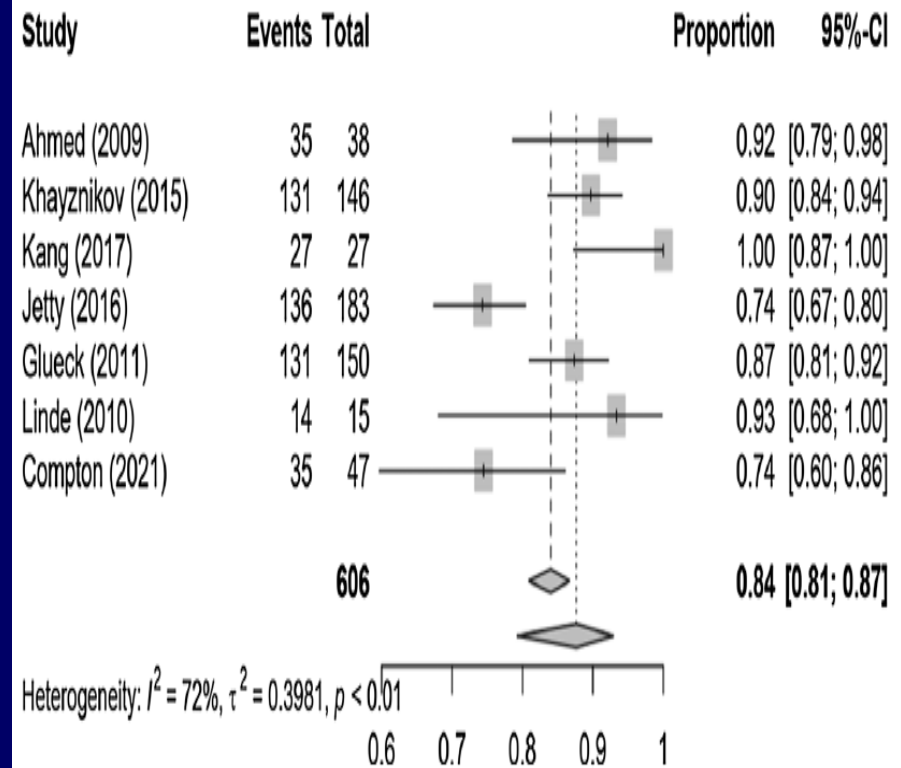


# High dose vitamin D supplements and statin therapy

## Follow-up duration and Baseline vitamin D

Duration of treatment		VitD normalized g/ml/≥79.9 nmol/L follow-up n (%)	Myositis–myalgia free on follow-up n (%)
Months mean (SD), median	n		
<3 months 1.4 (0.6), 1.2	34	25 (74%)	33 (97%)
3–<5 months 3.8 (0.6), 3.8	20	16 (80%)	17 (85%)
5–<8 months 6.5 (1.0), 6.8	21	18 (86%)	18 (86%)
8–<14 months 11.0 (1.8), 11.4	31	23 (74%)	25 (81%)
14–<20 months 16.6 (1.7), 16.9	10	7 (70%)	7 (70%)
20–<25 months 22.4 (1.0), 22.2	12	11 (92%)	11 (92%)
≥25 months 31.1 (4.4), 30.8	22	17 (77%)	20 (91%)
<b>Total cohort</b> 11.5 (10.3), 8.1	<b>150</b>		

## Myalgia results

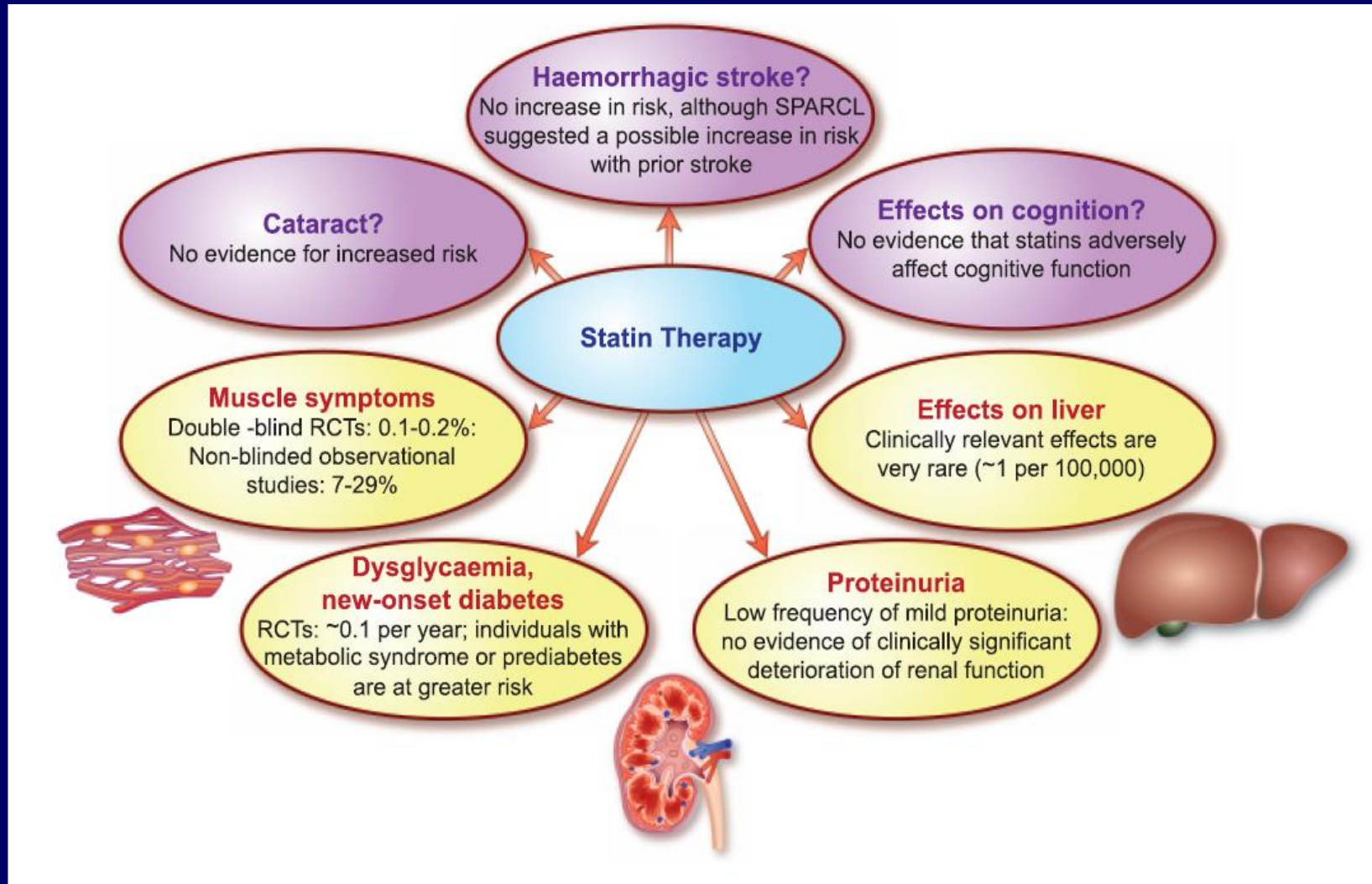


Glueck C et al; CMRO 2011; 27: 1673

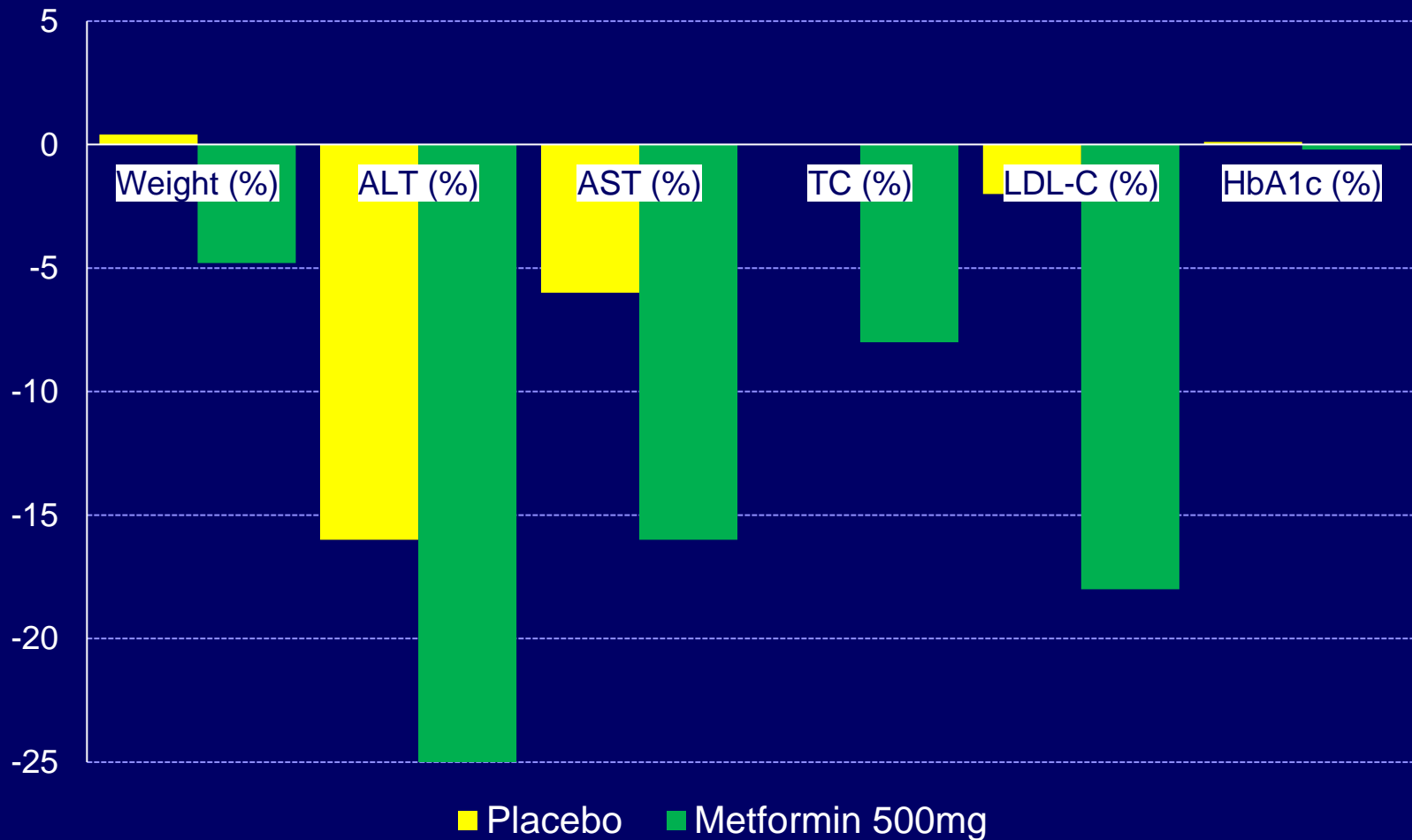
Teo CB et al; Hi BP & CVD Res 2022; 29 : 337

N = 606

# EAS consensus panel

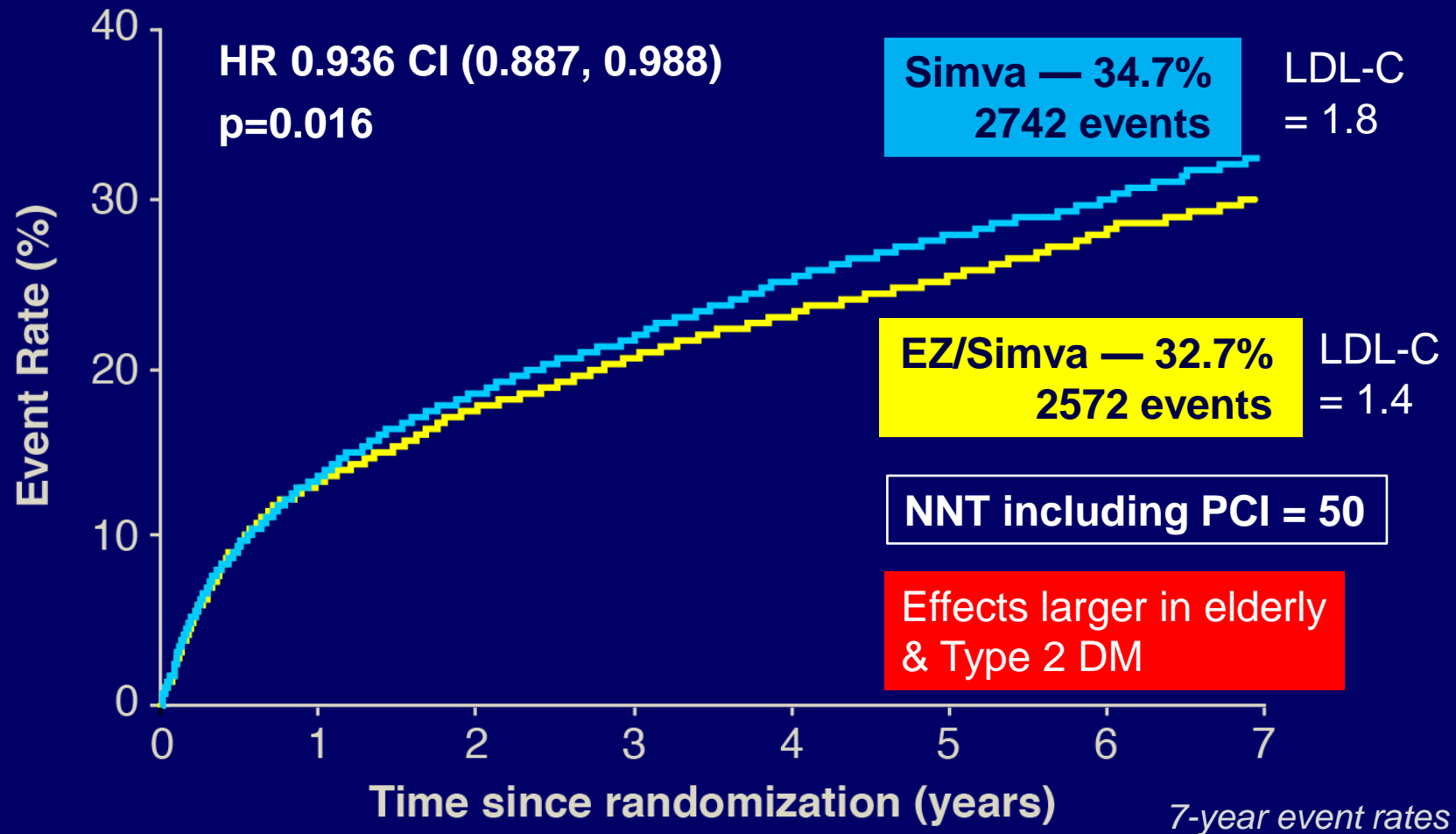


# Low dose Metformin in treatment of NAFLD



# IMPROVE-IT: Ezetimibe in ACS

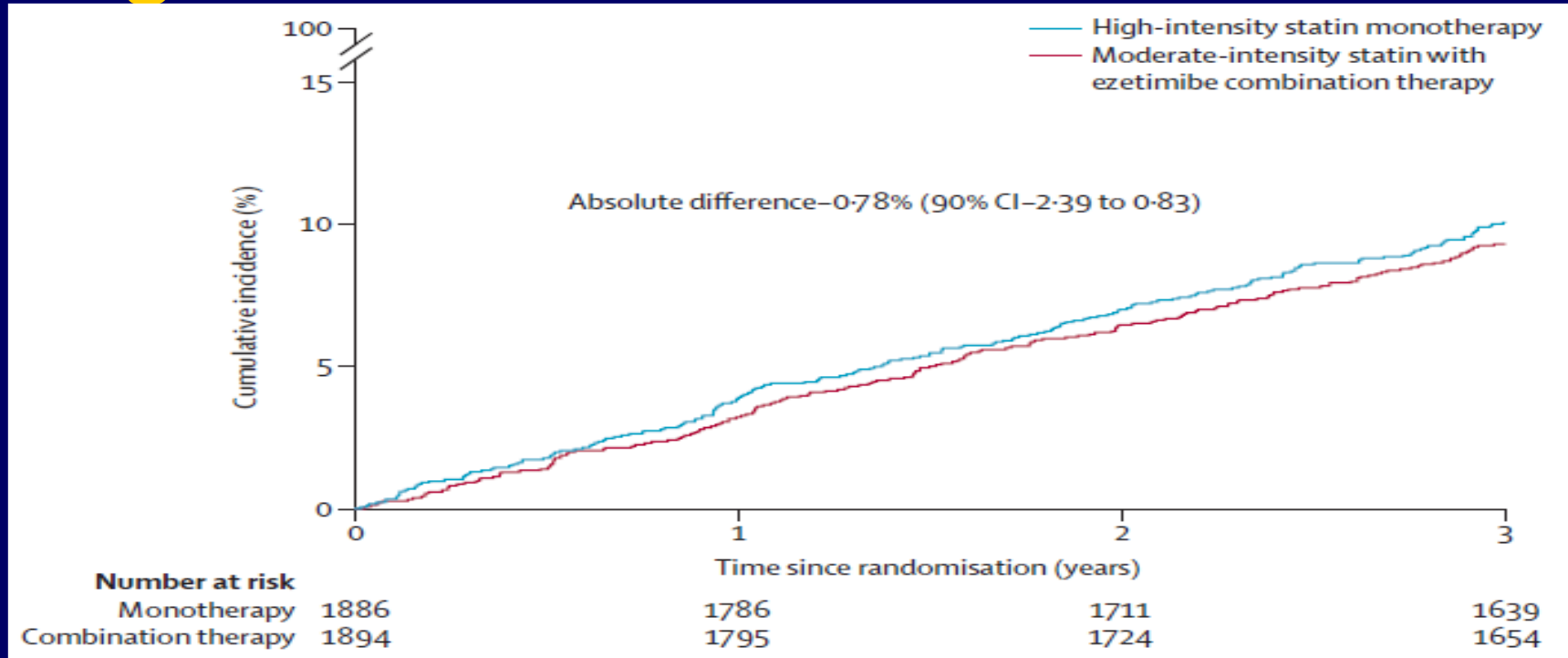
## Primary Endpoint — ITT



*CVD death, MI, UAS, CVA & PCI (≥30 days)*

# RACING:

## High dose Statin vs. Statin-Ezetimibe



	Statin-Eze	High statin	Difference
New-onset diabetes	145 (7.9%)	159 (8.7%)	-0.82 (-2.65 to 1.00)
New-onset diabetes with anti-diabetic medication initiation	95 (5.1%)	107 (5.8%)	..
Muscle-related adverse events	21 (1.1%)	34 (1.9%)	0.69 (-2.22 to 0.82)
Myalgia	17 (0.9%)	29 (1.6%)	0.66 (-1.46 to 1.06)
Myopathy	2 (0.1%)	4 (0.2%)	-0.11 (-0.50 to 0.25)
Myonecrosis*	11 (0.6%)	13 (0.7%)	0.11 (-0.72 to 0.48)



# Guidelines for use of PCSK-9 inhibitors

USA	Europe
<p><b><u>NLA</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CVD &amp; LDL-C &gt; 2.5mM               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● (nHDL-C &gt; 3.4 mM)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● FH no CVD LDL-C &gt; 3.4mM               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● (nHDL-C &gt; 4 mM)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><u>AACE/ASE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CVD-ACS &amp; LDL-C &gt; 1.9mM</li> <li>● Others as above</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>NICE TA</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CVD &amp; LDL-C &gt; 4.0 (2.5*)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Multi-vessel disease &gt; 3.5mM</li> </ul> </li> <li>● FH no CVD &amp; LDL-C &gt; 5mM</li> </ul> <p><b><u>EAS/ESC</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CVD/DM &amp; LDL-C &gt; 3.6               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rapid disease &gt; 2.6mM</li> </ul> </li> <li>● FH no CVD &amp; LDL-C &gt; 5mM               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Other CVD RFs &gt; 4.5mM</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Orringer C et al; J Clin Lipid 2017; 11: 880

Landmesser U et al; EHJ 2017; 38 : 2245

Jellinger PS et al; Endo Pract 2017; 23 : 479

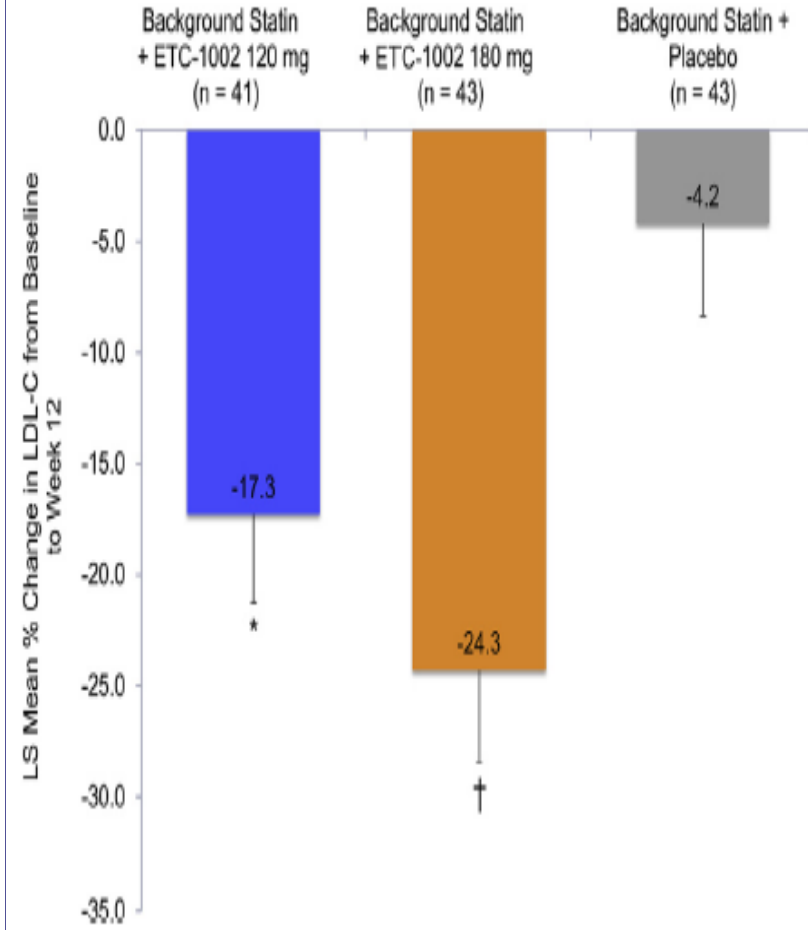
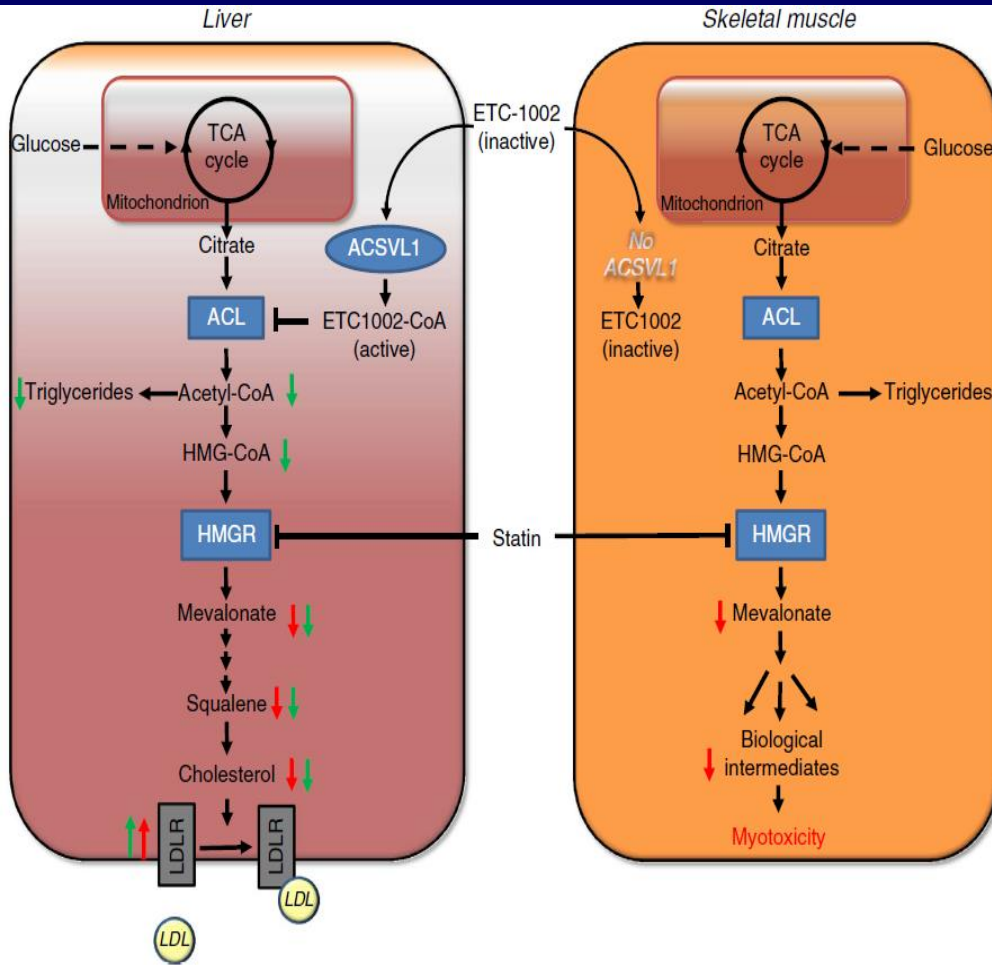
NICE.org.uk (TA394; TA393; TA 733)

# PCSK-9 inhibitors in statin-intolerant patients

Condition	Age	Gender	Pre-PCSK-9 LDL-C (mmol/L)	Post-PCSK9 LDL-C (mmol/L)	LDL-C PCSK-9 response (%)	Adverse events/comments
HoFH (LDLR & PCSK9)	31	Female	5.66	2.78	-51	Nil
FH (PCSK9 mutation)	78	Female	2.05	(4.32) 1.80	(+210) -18	Statin & ezetimibe stopped. No response to PCSK9 monotherapy. Response after ezetimibe added.
Remnant hyperlipidaemia (apoE2/E2); IHD	68	Male	1.88	(6.88) 1.50	(+350) -17	Statin stopped. No response to PCSK9 monotherapy. Response after fibrate added.
Myasthenia gravis	65	Female	4.02	2.92	-27	Nil
FH, HOCM, FSH muscular dystrophy carrier	49	Male	3.02	1.30	-57	Nil
Duchenne muscular dystrophy (carrier)	60	Female	5.73	1.39	-76	Nil
FH PE01 mitochondrial myopathy	75	Male	5.30	2.54	-51	Nil
RYR1 mutation carrier	37	Male	5.34	2.16	-60	Nil
Nephrotic syndrome	52	Female	2.12 TC = 19.8 mmol/L TG = 34.8 mmol/L	0.86 TC = 3.7 mmol/L TG = 5.06 mmol/L	(nil) -59	No response to PCSK9 monotherapy. Response only after pioglitazone added
Renal transplant	45	Male	5.41	3.13	-42	Nil
HIV CVD Bile salt malabsorption	62	Male	3.33	1.19	-66	Nil

# Other ways of lowering LDL-C

## ATP-citrate lyase & bempedoic acid



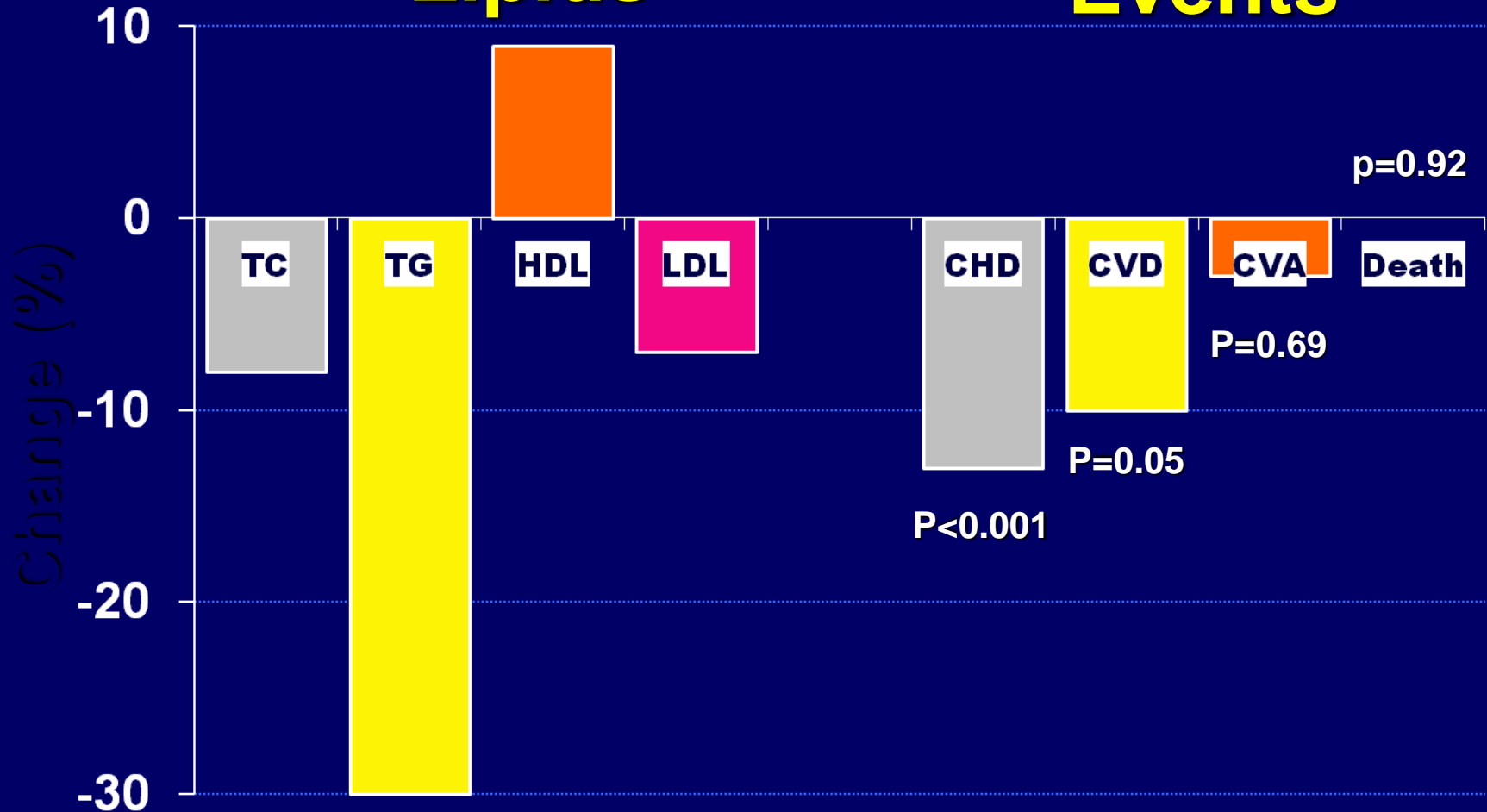
Pinkosky SL et al. Nature Comm 2016; 7: 13457  
 Ballantyne CM et al. Am J Cardiol 117: 1928

# Fibrates : meta-analyses

Secondary & primary prevention;

## Lipids

## Events



Saha S et al; Am Heart J 2007; 154: 943

Jun M et al; Lancet 2010 ; 375 : 1875

10 & 18 studies;  
n= 36489 & 45,058

# Conclusions

- Operator error
  - Doctor/Prescriber
- Poor standards
  - Guidelines dated
- Faulty design
  - Not ideal molecule
- Faulty construction
  - Ignoring co-morbidities
- Unexpected factors
  - Life

- Only prescribe statins to people that need them
- Exclude secondary causes
- Check for medication interactions
- If statin intolerance occurs
  - Switch statin
  - Consider intermittent dosing regimes
  - Consider/add non-statin lipid-lowering drugs

Knowledge, care, practice & routine are essential for safe prescribing