“A Comparative Study of Efficacy of Atorvastatin Alone and Atorvastatin with Omega-3 Fatty Acids Combination in Patients with Hyperlipidaemia Attending Tertiary Care Hospital”

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Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/JPRI/2021/v33i45B32830
Editor(s):
(1) Dr. S. Prabhu, Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering, India.

Reviewers:
(1) Micheal Vincent Abiodun, Federal Polytechnic Bida, Nigeria.
(2) G. Krishna Kumar, JIPMER, India.

Complete Peer review History: https://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/74791

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Background: Current treatment with statins has become an integral part of vascular diseases but monotherapy has a significant residual event rate. Due to particularly one of the factor associated with atherogenic lipid phenotype that is characterized by a low high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol and increase in non-HDL cholesterol like Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL). Omega-3 Fatty acids have demonstrated a preventerole in primary and, particularly secondary cardiovascular diseases. Hence this study was planned to compare the efficacy of Atorvastatin alone with Atorvastatin and Omega-3 fatty acids in treatment in hyperlipidaemia patients.

Methods: The study was comparative, randomized, and prospective and open labeled conducted in MI patients. A total of 100 patients were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. They were divided randomly into two Groups (Group–A and Group-B). Group-A was given Atorvastatin 10mg/day and Group-B was given Atorvastatin 10mg/day and Omega-3 fatty acids 600mg/day for 6 months. Follow up was done every month and efficacy was measured by assessing the lipoprotein levels in serum.

Results: The results were compared before treatment and after 6 months treatment. The levels...
were significantly decreased Total Cholesterol (TC), LDL, Low-Density Lipoprotein (VLDL), Triglycerides (TG) and HDL levels were increased in Group-A and Group-B. When these results compared between two Groups the HDL levels were increased also it shown high significance (<0.001) but there were no significance changes in other cholesterol levels.

**Conclusion:** The present study results showed that Atorvastatin and Omega-3 fatty acids treatment was more effective than Atorvastatin alone treatment in improving HDL-C levels from base line and it may have a additive effect in major coronary artery diseases.

**Keywords:** Dyslipidemia; LDL; HDL; Atorvastatin; Omega-3 fatty acids.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Hyperlipidemia patients have roughly twice the risk of developing Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) as compared to those with normal total cholesterol levels [1]. Over the past decade, Statins use has shown strong evidence in preventing cardiovascular morbidity and mortality but still there is controversy due to conflicting results in various types of studies [2-4] According to WHO, an estimated 7.2 million people died from CHD in 2008, representing approximately 12% of deaths worldwide [5].

Lipoproteins are classified into five types and these are responsible for synthesis of cell membrane, several biochemical functions like precursor for hormonal synthesis and fat-soluble vitamins [6]. Several studies have reported that Hyperlipidemia leads to several-fold increased risk of CHD. Among five lipoproteins LDL-C and HDL-C had a major role in increasing the risk of cardiovascular events, including myocardial infarction and stroke [7]. Pathological changes occurred in the setting of acute coronary syndrome (ACS), such as endothelial dysfunction, activation of inflammatory and coagulation cascades, and thrombus formation. The low HDL levels reflected disturbances in triglyceride metabolism. Recently anti-atherosclerotic properties of HDL have been discovered with the process of cholesterol clearance and named as Reverse Cholesterol Transfer (RCT) [8,9].

Currently statins are primarily used to lower cholesterol bio-synthesis and this will be protective against the cardiovascular disorders. The mode of action is via inhibition 3-Hydroxy-3-methyl glutaryl (HMG) CoA reductase - a rate limiting enzyme for cholesterol bio-synthesis pathway [10]. Based on risk of atherosclerosis, primary target is lowering LDL levels and secondary target is raising HDL levels [11,12]. Many clinical and meta-analysis studies have shown statins to be effective in approximately lowering the LDL levels by 20 – 50% as well as TG levels by 10 – 20% and causing a possible net increase in HDL levels by 5 – 10%. Despite this, a large number of patients are still at high cardiovascular risk even after statin monotherapy.13 Emerging therapies for restoring the normal levels of lipoproteins is to target various pathways like clearance of cholesterol and pro-atherogenic lipoproteins modifications [13-18].

Many Clinical trials of prescription omega-3 fatty acids as monotherapy or as an adjunct to statin therapy have supported its efficacy for improving the lipid profile (reducing triglycerides and triglyceride-rich lipoproteins and raising HDL-C) in individuals with hypertriglyceridemia or mixed dyslipidemia [18,19]. This combination therapy may be preferable to drug combinations for treatment of combined hyperlipidaemia. Hence, the present study was planned to assess the safety and efficacy of Atorvastatin alone and Atorvastatin and omega-3 fatty acids in MI patients with Hyperlipidemia in the department of Medicine, in collaboration with department of pharmacology, Vijayanagara Institute of Medical Sciences (VIMS) a tertiary care hospital, Bellary.

2. **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

2.1 **Study Design**

The study was a comparative, prospective, randomized and open label study. The present study was conducted during the period March 2011 – April 2012. Patients with history of recent MI or post MI, attending the outpatient (OPD)/ in patient (IPD) department of General Medicine, Vijayanagara Institute of Medical sciences (VIMS), Bellary. The study was started before 3 months of the treatment. During 3 months around 210 patients were came to OPD & IPD with history of MI. For selection of the participants by applying exclusion and inclusion criteria 84 patients were excluded. 26 patients were not shown interest to participate in the study.
Reaming 100 participants were included in the study.

A thorough clinical examination was done for all patients and the required laboratory investigations such as routine laboratory tests like Complete blood count, Hemoglobin%, blood sugar, serum creatinine, blood urea and liver function test (LFT), Lipid profile and Electrocardiogram. A total of One Hundred (100) patients were selected for the study by applying Inclusion - Exclusion criteria Fig. 1.

Also, patients who were taking medications, known to affect plasma lipid concentration or known to interact with study medications were excluded from the study. The participants randomly divided into two Groups and named as Group-A and Group-B by simple randomization using random numbers generated by computer software research randomizer. Group-A subjects were given Atorvastatin 10 mg tablet once daily (OD) orally and Group-B subjects were given Atorvastatin 10 mg tablet OD along with Omega-3 fatty acids 300 mg capsule twice daily (BD) (600mg/day). For all the study participants the drugs were dispensed with free of cost during the treatment period (6 months) and were followed up every month till the end of the study Fig. 2.

Clinical Efficacy from week 0 (before the drug intervention) till the end of study (after drug intervention) was assessed by doing lipid profile. It was repeated every month to assessing the change in parameters like reduction in Total cholesterol (TC), Triglycerides (TGs), LDL cholesterol levels and rise in HDL cholesterol in each Group i.e., Group-A and Group-B. Also Liver function test was repeated at 3rd month and at the end of the study.

The data was collected and entered into a specially designed proforma (Case Recording Form) for the study. The data was analysed by t-test and P values for independent Groups.

**Fig. 1.** Inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study participates

**Fig. 2.** Consort diagram describing the flow of participants in the study
3. RESULTS

3.1 Efficacy of Two Groups

3.1.1 Total cholesterol

After the treatment, total cholesterol levels were significantly (p<0.001) reduced in both the Groups. In patients who were treated with Atorvastatin (Group A), the mean reduction of total cholesterol levels was 27.80±12.88 and in those treated with Atorvastatin with Omega-3 fatty acids (Group-B) TC levels were 27.90±15.91. The percentage decrease of TC levels in Group-A was 12.66% and Group-B was 12.54%. The percentage decrease in TC levels in Group-A was 11.5% and in Group-B it was 13.5%. When Group-B was compared with Group-A the TC levels were not significantly decreased. The difference between them was 0.12%.

3.1.2 HDL cholesterol

After the treatment, in both the Group’s total HDL levels were significantly (p<0.001) increased as compared to the baselines levels. In patients who received Atorvastatin alone (Group-A), the mean increase in HDL - cholesterol levels was 2.16±1.01 and in Atorvastatin with Omega-3 fatty acids treated patients (Group-B) it was 3.57±1.26. The percentage increase of HDL cholesterol levels in Group-A was 5.54% and in Group-B it was 9.27%. When Group-B was compared with Group-A the HDL levels were significantly increased. The difference between them was 3.7%.

3.1.3 LDL-cholesterol

After six months treatment, LDL cholesterol levels were significantly (p<0.001) reduced in both the Groups. In Atorvastatin alone treated patients (Group-A), the mean reduction of LDL-levels were 25.63±13.19 and in Atorvastatin with Omega-3 fatty acids treated patients (Group-B), levels were 26.30±15.79. The percentage decrease of LDL cholesterol levels in Group-A was 17.78% and in Group-B was 17.71%. The percentage decrease in LDL levels in Group-A was 11.5% and in Group-B was 13.5%. When Group-B was compared with Group-A the LDL levels were not significantly decreased. The difference between them was 0.7%.

3.1.4 VLDL cholesterol

At end of the treatment period, VLDL cholesterol levels were significantly (p<0.01) reduced in both the Groups. In patients who received Atorvastatin (Group-A), the mean reduction of VLDL-cholesterol levels was 4.34±2.51 and in Atorvastatin with Omega-3 fatty acids treated patients (Group-B), it was 5.16±2.62. The percentage decrease in VLDL-C levels in Group-A was 11.5% and in Group-B it was 13.50%. The percentage decrease in VLDL levels in Group-A was 11.5% and in Group-B it was 13.5%. When Group-B was compared with Group-A the VLDL levels were not significantly decreased. The difference between them was 1.93% Table 1.

3.1.5 Triglycerides

After six months treatment, triglycerides levels were significantly (p<0.001) reduced in both the Groups. In patients who received Atorvastatin (Group-A), the mean reduction of VLDL-cholesterol levels was 21.62±12.65 and in Atorvastatin with Omega-3 fatty acids received patients (Group-B), it was 25.86±13.14. The percentage decrease in TG levels in Group-A was 11.5% and in Group-B it was 13.5%. When Group-B was compared with Group-A the triglycerides levels were not significantly decreased. The difference between them was 2% Fig. 3.

3.2 Post Test Analysis to Compare Between Two Groups

3.2.1 Total cholesterol

In Atorvastatin Group (Group-A) the mean reduction of total cholesterol levels was 27.80±12.88 and in combination Group (Group-B) it was 27.90±15.91. In Atorvastatin Group the mean ± standard deviation (SD) of total cholesterol levels after treatment was reduced to 187.80 ± 12.47mg/dl. In Atorvastatin + Omega-3 fatty acids Group reduction was 184.54±13.58 mg/dl (p > 0.05).

3.2.2 HDL cholesterol

In Atorvastatin Group the mean increase in HDL - cholesterol levels was 2.16±1.01 and in combination Group it was 3.57±1.26. In Atorvastatin Group the mean ± standard deviation (SD) of HDL cholesterol levels after treatment was increased to 41.50 ± 1.67 mg/dl. In Atorvastatin + Omega-3 fatty acids Group increased to 42.78±2.08 mg/dl (p < 0.001).
3.2.3 LDL-cholesterol

In Atorvastatin Group the mean reduction of LDL-cholesterol levels was 25.63±1.19 and in combination Group it was 26.30±15.79. In Atorvastatin Group the mean ± standard deviation (SD) of LDL cholesterol levels after treatment was reduced 114.36 ± 12.46 mg/dl. In Atorvastatin + Omega-3 fatty acids Group the reduction was 110.20±13.36 mg/dl (p > 0.05).

3.2.4 VLDL cholesterol

In Atorvastatin Group the mean reduction of VLDL-cholesterol levels was 4.34±2.51 and in combination Group it was 5.16±2.62. In Atorvastatin Group the mean ± standard deviation (SD) of VLDL cholesterol levels after treatment was reduced to 31.69 ± 1.44 mg/dl. In Atorvastatin + Omega-3 fatty acids Group it was 31.55±1.88 mg/dl (p > 0.05) Table 2.

Table 1. Total cholesterol, triglycerides and lipoproteins levels of before treatment and at end of the treatment with atorvastatin 10 mg

|                      | Mean ± standard deviation of Baseline value | Mean ± standard deviation of treatment value | Mean changes from base line | P value |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
|                      | Mean | SD  | Mean | SD  | %     |                  |
| Total Cholesterol(mg/dl) | 215.60±16.82 | 187.80±12.47 | 12.66 | <0.001 |
| HDL Cholesterol(mg/dl)   | 39.34±1.77  | 41.50±1.67   | 5.54  | <0.001 |
| LDL Cholesterol(mg/dl)   | 140.24±16.83 | 114.60±12.32 | 17.78 | <0.001 |
| VLDL Cholesterol(mg/dl)  | 36.04±3.38  | 31.69±1.44   | 11.57 | <0.001 |
| Triglycerides Cholesterol(mg/dl) | 180.10±16.91 | 158.48±7.24 | 11.5  | <0.001 |

3.2.5 Triglycerides

In Atorvastatin Group the mean reduction triglycerides levels was 21.62±12.65 and in combination Group it was 25.86±13.14. In Atorvastatin Group the mean ± standard deviation (SD) of triglycerides levels after treatment was reduced to 158.48 ± 7.24 mg/dl. In Atorvastatin + Omega-3 fatty acids Group it reduced to 157.78±9.44 mg/dl (p > 0.05) Fig. 4.

3.3 Age and Sex

Among 100 patients, 82 were male patients and 18 were female patients. So, the incidence of coronary heart disease with Hyperlipidaemia is more in men than in women in our study Groups. Our study showed 26 patients were less than 40yrs of age, indicating increasing prevalence of CAD in younger population.

Table 2. Total cholesterol, triglycerides and lipoproteins levels of before treatment and at end of the treatment with atorvastatin 10 mg and omega 3-fatty acids

|                      | Mean ± standard deviation of Baseline value | Mean ± standard deviation of treatment value | Mean changes from base line | P value |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
|                      | Mean | SD  | Mean | SD  | %     |                  |
| Total Cholesterol(mg/dl) | 212.44±22.75 | 184.54±13.58 | 12.54 | <0.001 |
| HDL Cholesterol(mg/dl)   | 39.20±2.60  | 42.78±2.08   | 9.27% | <0.001 |
| LDL Cholesterol(mg/dl)   | 136.50±22.48 | 110.20±13.36 | 17.71 | <0.001 |
| VLDL Cholesterol(mg/dl)  | 36.72±4.08  | 31.55±1.88   | 13.50 | <0.001 |
| Triglycerides Cholesterol(mg/dl) | 183.64±20.42 | 157.78±9.44 | 13.5  | <0.001 |
Fig. 1. The efficacy in % of difference in decrease between Group-A and Group-B

Fig. 2. Age distribution of study participants

Fig. 3. Number of male and female participants in each group
4. DISCUSSION

Several prospective trials have demonstrated that the addition of Omega-3 fatty acid to statins improved cardiovascular mortality [19,20]. In the present study, we assessed the safety and efficacy of six months treatment with atorvastatin in 50 subjects and atorvastatin and Omega-3 fatty acids in 50 subjects with MI Fig. 5. The efficacy parameters - LDL, HDL and TG levels were significantly reduced in both the Groups. While comparing these parameters in between the Groups, the HDL levels were only significantly raised in Group-B as compared to Group-A. In CVD, improving HDL levels is a secondary target but several clinical studies concluded that reduction of HDL cholesterol could be a greater coronary risk factor than an increase in LDL cholesterol levels [8,9].

The therapeutic target of cardiovascular protective effect and its possible mechanisms have been discussed below. Elevation of HDL levels potentiates the biological properties including anti-atherogenic, anti-thrombotic and anti-inflammatory [21,22]. HDL has ability to uptake and return excess cholesterol from peripheral tissues back to the liver. It also promotes cholesterol removal through various efflux pathways from macrophages in the artery wall and has potential protective effect against arterial disease [23]. In peritoneal macrophages of mouse model Maria P A et al in 2007 demonstrated that around 34% of the total efflux was mediated by ABCA1, 20% by SRB1, 46% by ABCG1, small contribution by SR-BI and another pathway is aqueous. HDL and its subpopulations (ApoA-I, ApoA-II, ApoA-IV and ApoE) have anti-oxidant activity by preventing the proatherogenic oxidative modifications of LDL [24]. The important key role is activation of PON1 which diminishes the lipid peroxidation. It has a strong anti-inflammatory activity and in addition it down regulates the expression of adhesion molecules against monocytes release of inflammatory mediators and cytokines [25]. The HDL anti-thrombin effect is by reducing Platelet activating factor (PAF) which is a potent activator of platelets, monocytes, and leukocytes. PAF is metabolized by the PAF – acetyl hydrolase (AH) enzyme whose activity is associated with HDL [26]. By attenuating expression of tissue factor as well as selectins and by down regulation of thrombin generation through the C-reactive protein, the platelet activation will be inhibited. HDL activates the release of Prostacyclin-PGI2 and this will prevent the platelet aggregation and promote the vascular smooth muscle relaxation [27].

At present, the pharmacological therapy for the various pathological conditions with fixed dose combinations are preferred for better patient compliance, potentiation of therapeutic response like synergism or additive or adjuvant effect and reduction of the side effects of one of the drugs. In the present study, MI patients were treated with statins and Omega-3 fatty acids and beneficial effects were observed. In our study, 4 patients complained of constipation and 2 patients complained of flatulence in Atorvastatin Group. In Omega Group 3 patients complained of constipation, 6 patients complained of flatulence and 2 patients complained of diarrhea during 1st month which gradually subsided over a period time.

5. CONCLUSION

Current trend of pharmacological approaches are the combination therapies for disorders or diseases to prevent resistance or tolerance development, improve the efficacy or reduce the unwanted effects and improve the patient compliance as well as cost benefit ratio of treatment. In our study, the pathological condition was treated with novel combination but still only minimal beneficial effects have been observed. Our research study was done in a small group of patients with six months duration. Our study suggest that by elevating HDL levels, normal levels of other lipoproteins may be obtained by longer term treatment of the statins with Omega-3 fatty acids. The study limitations are demonstrated short term effect of the drug Atorvastatin 10mg tablet OD along with Omega-3 fatty acids 300mg capsule twice daily (BD) (600mg/day) in small sample size and not proven the reduction cardiovascular abnormal events by improving the lipid profile.

DISCLAIMER

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.
CONSENT

The patients were explained about the details of the study and a written informed consent was taken from all the patients before including them in the study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics committee (IEC) of VIMS, Bellary, before the start of study.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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