



Drug FAQs for Members

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The ENHANCE Trial: Simvastatin versus Vytorin/Zetia

Background

- On January 14, 2008, the makers of Vytorin announced the result of a study called the ENHANCE trial on Vytorin and simvastatin. Vytorin is a combination of two medicines used to lower cholesterol: simvastatin (Zocor) and ezetimibe (Zetia).
- The ENHANCE study compared Vytorin to simvastatin alone in 720 patients with very high cholesterol levels. Their LDL-cholesterol (the bad kind) was about 320 mg/dL compared to a desirable level of less than 100 mg/dL. All of these patients had an uncommon inherited condition called heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia.
- The study found:
 - Vytorin lowered LDL-cholesterol more than the same dose of simvastatin alone.
 - The main point of the study was to see if the size of cholesterol deposits (plaque) in the carotid artery (an artery in the neck) was changed with Vytorin more than simvastatin. The results, however, did not show a difference in plaque size between simvastatin and Vytorin after two years of treatment.
 - There was no difference in side effects between these medicines.
- No other information has been released. The study has not yet been published or presented at a scientific meeting.

Misinformation in the News

- The media buzz around this study has caused unnecessary concern for patients taking Vytorin and Zetia. Here's what you should know:
 - Statins alone (like simvastatin, lovastatin, pravastatin, and atorvastatin) have proven benefits from much larger studies and significantly reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.
 - Based on available clinical studies with these medications, Vytorin and Zetia remain **safe** and reasonable options when additional LDL-cholesterol reduction is needed. For some patients, the use of Vytorin or Zetia can help them reach LDL-cholesterol targets.
 - This study looked only at the size of cholesterol deposits and found simvastatin and Vytorin worked equally well. More studies are needed to examine whether there is a difference in the risk of heart attacks and stroke when taking Vytorin or simvastatin alone.
 - It is not known if the results of the ENHANCE study apply to everyone because most people do not have such high LDL-cholesterol levels.

Should I continue to take Vytorin / Zetia?

- **Yes.** Kaiser Permanente physician experts in cholesterol management have carefully reviewed the results of the ENHANCE trial and recommend that you continue your cholesterol medications as prescribed, including Vytorin and Zetia.
 - The recommendation to use statins such as simvastatin first to achieve LDL-C target has not changed.
 - When added treatment is needed, the combination medicine Vytorin remains a reasonable option. You may discuss other treatment options with your doctor.
- The American College of Cardiology (ACC), the American Heart Association (AHA), and the National Lipid Association (NLA) have all issued statements that agree with Kaiser Permanente's experts' interpretations and recommendations about the ENHANCE trial. You may access the ACC statement at: <http://www.acc.org/enhance.htm>, the AHA statement at <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3053094>, and the NLA statement at <http://www.lipid.org/news/1000053.php>.