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Diabetes Medication May Prevent Patients from Developing Heart Failure

Commonly prescribed to lower blood sugar in diabetic patients, GLP-1 medications appears to also protect these patients from developing heart failure, according to a study at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

The retrospective study looked at 4,427 diabetic patients who were taking blood-sugar-lowering medications at Henry Ford Hospital between January 1, 2000 and July 1, 2012. Of these patients, 1,488 were taking GLP-1 medications (glucagon-likepeptide-1 analogs and dipeptidyl peptidase-4 inhibitors) and

2,939 were not.

Over an observation time of 663 days, there were 281 hospitalisations, of which 184 were due to heart failure, and 158 deaths. The researchers also looked into hospitalisations and deaths from other causes.

Results were adjusted for factors such as gender, age, race, coronary disease, heart failure, duration of diabetes, and the number of anti-diabetic medications taken, in order to identify the effect specifically attributable to taking GLP-1 medications.

Use of GLP1 medications was associated with a reduced risk of hospitalisation for heart failure or any other reason, as well as fewer deaths.

"Diabetic adults die of heart disease two to four times more than those without diabetes," said lead investigator of the study Dr. David Lanfear. "These preliminary results look very promising," he said, adding: "However, this was a retrospective study and this subject needs further investigation."

There are more than 25 million adults and children in the US with diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association. The ADA estimates that nearly 80 million people may be pre-diabetic, with nearly two million new cases diagnosed in adults in 2010.

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