Metformin Could Lower Prostate Cancer Risk

Vanessa Pearson August 12, 2013

A new study conducted at the University of Toronto and published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology shows a link between diabetics who take metformin and a reduced risk of death from prostate cancer.

(Newswire.net – August 13, 2013) Toronto, ON – New research suggests that metformin, often referred to by the brand names Glucophage or Glumetza, may reduce the risk of death from prostate cancer. The drug is currently prescribed to control the symptoms of diabetes, and the study involved only those who are suffering from this medical condition.

The study was conducted by Dr. David Margel of the Rabin Medical Center in Petah Tikva, Israel, while at the University of Toronto. According to Dr. Margel, “It’s associated in a dose-response manner.” Patients who have taken the standard metformin dosage for longer periods were less likely to die of prostate cancer, whether or not the cancer derived from diabetic complications.

What remains to be seen is whether the medication will also be able to reduce the risk of death from prostate cancer in those who do not suffer from diabetes. In addition, this most positive of metformin side effects seems to be strictly limited to this specific drug. No other diabetic medications showed any significance in the study.

Study Surveyed 3,837 Men With Diabetes

The population-based retrospective study conducted by Dr. Margel was published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology on August 5, 2013. During the study, medical records of 3,837 men with diabetes were compiled and analyzed. Each of the men was at least 67 years of age and diagnosed with prostate cancer while receiving healthcare services in Ontario.

Approximately one-third of the men in the study were taking a standard metformin dosage while the other two-thirds were taking alternative medications. The median period of those taking metformin before being diagnosed with prostate cancer was 19 months.

While examining followup visits for four years after the cancer diagnosis, Dr. Margel discovered that patients taking the drug were 24 percent less likely to die of prostate cancer for every six months the drug was taken after the diagnosis.

Although the results of the study are promising, no direct cause-and-effect correlation could be found between the medication and the reduced risk.

Metformin has been a popular medication among diabetics since it was first introduced because it is effective and inexpensive. In addition, metformin side effects are minor and infrequent. The results of the study proving that men taking the medication experience a lower risk of death from prostate cancer is simply an added bonus.