

Trials find no benefits of Zetia

The U.S. makers of the cholesterol-lowering drug Zetia say a clinical trial failed to identify any medical benefits of the medication.

Merck and Schering-Plough, the New Jersey companies that jointly market Zetia and Vytorin, a drug that combines Zetia with the cholesterol drug Zocor, said that while Zetia has been shown to reduce cholesterol by 15 percent to 20 percent in most patients, it was not found to reduce the risk of heart attacks or strokes, The New York Times reported Monday.

The trial also found no evidence the drug reduces the growth of fatty plaque in arteries. The trial had been designed to show the drug could fight growth of plaque.

Dr. Steven Nissen, chairman of cardiology at the Cleveland Clinic, called the results "shocking" and said patients should not take Zetia unless all other cholesterol drugs have been tried and failed.

"This is as bad a result for the drug as anybody could have feared," he said.

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