Dear Editor,

We read with interest the article by Khayznikov et al., regarding the resolution of statin intolerance with vitamin D repletion. We too have tried this strategy among a similarly statin intolerant population (median—three previous statins) and believe vitamin D supplementation plays a role in treating certain individuals. Our results demonstrated that vitamin D repletion to >30 ng/ml, allowed 53% (18/34) of the intolerant patients to utilize some form of alternative or daily statin dosing or a higher dose among those receiving a statin but experiencing tolerable symptoms, for at least four months (mean follow up 8.5 + 4.4 months). Our findings are encouraging but well below the 88-95% statin tolerability rates reported in the present study. Directly comparing study populations and results is not feasible; however, one potential explanation for response differences may be the vitamin D level achieved. For instance, the vitamin D levels among those tolerating the statin rechallenge in our group was 44 ng/ml compared to 53-55 ng/ml in the current report, suggesting that perhaps our vitamin D repletion was incomplete, despite each group falling within the range suggested by the Endocrine Society.

Another factor that we believe played a prominent role in the resolution of myalgic symptoms in the current study was the predominant utilization of rosuvastatin. The authors recognize that rosuvastatin is less frequently associated with myotoxicity; however, this should not be minimized. In fact, the same research center performed a similar study, and determined that the vast majority of previously intolerant subjects reported no adverse effects when rechallenged with rosuvastatin 5-10 mg daily.

Lastly, we agree with the authors that an optimal study evaluating statin intolerance would be blinded and placebo-controlled, given the subjective nature of most myotoxicity. In fact, this design was recently utilized to assess various lipid-altering agents, including the investigational proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 (PCSK9) inhibitors, among subjects unable to tolerate two or more different statins because of unexplained muscle-related symptoms. After successful completion of a four-week single-blind placebo run-in period, subjects were randomized in a double-blind manner to a PCSK9 injection Q two weeks + oral placebo daily, ezetimibe 10 mg daily + placebo injection Q two weeks, or atorvastatin 20 mg daily + placebo injection Q two weeks, for 24 weeks. Such a study design provided novel, insightful, and revealing findings with regard to statin intolerance. For example, the trial demonstrated that 6.9% of subjects were excluded from randomization due to muscle-related adverse events during the placebo run-in period. Further, 75% of the previously intolerant patients tolerated the atorvastatin 20 mg daily for the duration of the 24-week study period. Such results strongly highlight the subjectivity of statin intolerance and the major influence of a placebo effect in many patients.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

James M Backes, Janelle F Ruisinger, Brian J Barnes1, Patrick M Moriarty2
Departments of Pharmacy Practice and Medicine and 1Medicine, Kansas University Medical Center and the University of Kansas School of Pharmacy, Kansas, 2Department of Pharmacy Practice, University of Kansas School of Pharmacy, Kansas, United States
E-mail: jbackes@kumc.edu

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