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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Dudley patients in statins study**

A major health study using Dudley patients has provided evidence on the safety and efficacy of statins for people who have rheumatoid arthritis and are therefore at a higher risk of heart attack and stroke.

News networks around the world have picked up on the study, which was published in *Arthritis & Rheumatology*, the official journal of the American College of Rheumatology.

Professor George Kitas of The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust was lead author on the paper. The Trust provided 150 volunteers, more than any of the other 100 participating trusts in the country.

Professor Kitas said: "This is quite important for people with rheumatoid arthritis, who are faced not only with the difficulties caused by their condition but, if not appropriately managed, also with a high risk for the additional burden of heart disease.

"The trial was originally designed in Dudley with academic partners and, with the University of Manchester, we were the official sponsors. Dudley was one of the three main co-ordinating centres and housed the majority of the trial management team.

"It is important for the Trust, as the completion of such a major trial demonstrates the great potential we have to advance knowledge and improve practice through locally generated but internationally competitive research."

Patients with rheumatoid arthritis have around a 50 per cent higher risk of heart attack and stroke compared with the general population. Lowering bad cholesterol with statins is known to help prevent cardiovascular events in certain high-risk individuals, but it was unclear whether they were safe and effective for patients with inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.

To find out, researchers including those at The Dudley Group designed a trial for 3,002 patients with rheumatoid arthritis which compared a statin with a placebo – a substance with no therapeutic effect. Patients did not know which they were taking.

At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that statins were safe for people with rheumatoid arthritis and appeared as effective at preventing heart attacks and strokes as for the general population.

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Approved by: