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ABC News Release

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Statement from the Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. Related to the ENHANCE Trial and Cholesterol Medications

--A strong health professional-patient relationship is the key to good care

African Americans have the highest coronary heart disease death rates (dying from heart attacks) in the United States. High cholesterol levels in African Americans often go undetected and untreated. Atherosclerosis, the buildup of fatty plaques inside vessels, is a progressive disease of accumulation of lipids and also inflammation and clotting in medium-sized and large arteries.

In ENHANCE (Effect of Combination Ezetimibe and High-Dose Simvastatin vs. Simvastatin Alone on the Atherosclerotic Process in Patients with Heterozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia) trial released January 14, 2008 by Merck/Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals, 720 patients with an inherited form of severe cholesterol elevation were studied to show differences in progression of plaques in the neck or carotid arteries. A widespread media storm ensued due to lack of benefit in ultrasound of the carotid arteries from the combination of ezetimibe and simvastatin (sold as Vytorin) over simvastatin (brand name Zocor). No harm was seen in either medication group and overall cardiac events were nearly identical in both.

Stopping medications based on this study alone is not appropriate. The next step for any concerned patient with high cholesterol is to talk with his/her healthcare provider before making any changes in care.

In contrast to the abrupt discontinuation of cholesterol-lowering agents, medications remain an important means of controlling the main risk factor for atherosclerosis, high LDL-C (bad cholesterol). Zetia may be reasonable to lower cholesterol for needed additional LDL-C lowering in combination with a statin, or Zetia alone if statins are not tolerated.

African Americans, as all other patients, need a strong partnership with their health providers. Changing or stopping medications because of media reports or direct-to-consumer advertisements is not the best way to maintain good health.

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About the Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.:

The Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. (ABC) is dedicated to eliminating cardiovascular health disparities. Since 1974, ABC has been an important voice and foremost advocate in prevention and reduction of cardiovascular diseases, especially in minorities. The ABC advances its primary mission through education, research, and health promotion and policy advocacy. The diverse membership consists of over 600 physicians, scientists, nurses, students and community health advocates. For more information, please call 800-753-9222 or visit www.abc cardio.org.