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### **Paper:**

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## **Effect of liraglutide on cardiovascular events in patients with type 2 diabetes and polyvascular disease: results of the LEADER trial**

Subodh Verma, MD PhD<sup>1</sup>; Deepak L. Bhatt, MD, MPH<sup>2</sup>; Stephen C. Bain, MD<sup>3</sup>; John B. Buse, MD PhD<sup>4</sup>; Johannes F.E. Mann, MD<sup>5</sup>; Steven P. Marso, MD<sup>6</sup>; Michael A. Nauck, MD<sup>7</sup>; Neil R. Poulter, F.Med.Sci<sup>8</sup>; Richard E. Pratley, MD<sup>9</sup>; Bernard Zinman, MD<sup>10</sup>; Marie M. Michelsen, MD<sup>11</sup>; Tea Monk Fries, MD PhD<sup>11</sup>; Søren Rasmussen, MSc PhD<sup>11</sup>; Lawrence A. Leiter, MD<sup>12</sup>; the LEADER Publication Committee on behalf of the LEADER Trial Investigators

<sup>1</sup>Division of Cardiac Surgery, St. Michael's Hospital; and Departments of Surgery and Pharmacology & Toxicology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<sup>2</sup>Brigham and Women's Hospital Heart and Vascular Center and Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Life Science, Swansea University, Swansea, UK

<sup>4</sup>University of North Carolina School of Medicine, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

<sup>5</sup>Friedrich Alexander University of Erlangen, Erlangen, Germany

<sup>6</sup>HCA Midwest Health Heart & Vascular Institute, Kansas City, MO, USA

<sup>7</sup>Diabetes Center Bochum-Hattingen, St. Josef-Hospital, Ruhr-University Bochum, Bochum, Germany

<sup>8</sup>Imperial College London, London, UK

<sup>9</sup>Florida Hospital Translational Research Institute for Metabolism and Diabetes, Orlando, Florida, USA

<sup>10</sup>Lunenfeld Tanenbaum Research Institute, Mount Sinai Hospital and University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<sup>11</sup>Novo Nordisk A/S, Søborg, Denmark

<sup>12</sup>Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, St. Michael's Hospital, and University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

**Corresponding author:** Subodh Verma, MD PhD FRCSC, Professor, University of Toronto, Cardiac Surgeon, St. Michael's Hospital, 30 Bond Street, 8th Floor, Bond Wing, Toronto, ON, M5B 1W8, Canada.

Email: VermaSu@smh.ca. Telephone: +1-857-307-1992

The presence of polyvascular disease, defined as atherosclerosis involving more than one distinct vascular territory, is a strong, independent predictor of cardiovascular events.<sup>1-4</sup> In the LEADER trial,<sup>5</sup> the human glucagon-like peptide 1 analog liraglutide reduced cardiovascular events in patients with type 2 diabetes (T2D) at high cardiovascular risk. In this post hoc analysis of LEADER, we evaluated the effects of liraglutide stratified by number of atherosclerotic vascular territories (coronary, cerebrovascular, and/or peripheral)

Data and analytic methods supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. LEADER (ClinicalTrials.gov NCT01179048) was a randomized trial of liraglutide (1.8 mg or maximum tolerated dose) versus placebo in 9340 patients with T2D and high cardiovascular risk (median follow-up=3.8 years).<sup>5</sup> The primary outcome was a composite of cardiovascular death, non-fatal myocardial infarction (MI), or non-fatal stroke (major adverse cardiovascular events, MACE). The key secondary expanded outcome (expanded MACE) also included hospitalization for unstable angina, coronary revascularization, or hospitalization for heart failure.

The ethics committee or institutional review board at each participating center approved the trial protocol. Patients provided informed consent. Cardiovascular outcomes were prospectively adjudicated by an independent, blinded event adjudication committee. Atherosclerotic vascular territories included coronary (MI,  $\geq 50\%$  coronary artery stenosis, percutaneous coronary intervention or coronary artery bypass graft surgery, angina pectoris, or asymptomatic ischemia), cerebrovascular (stroke, transient ischemic attack,  $\geq 50\%$  intracranial or carotid artery stenosis) and peripheral arteries ( $\geq 50\%$  peripheral artery stenosis). Information was extracted from patients' baseline medical history. Risk groups were determined by number of

vascular territories involved: polyvascular disease as two or more, single vascular disease as one, and a group with no documented atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD).

The hazard ratios (HRs) comparing risk groups were calculated using a Cox proportional hazards model with treatment and risk group as factors. The treatment effect of liraglutide versus placebo within risk groups was estimated using Cox proportional hazards regression model with treatment, risk group, and the interaction of both as factors.

In LEADER, 6775 patients (72.5%) had documented ASCVD. In patients with ASCVD, 1536 (23%) had a baseline history of polyvascular disease, and 5239 (77%) had single vascular disease. For the total population, the distribution of vascular territory involvement is shown in Figure, A. Briefly, 5364 patients (57.4%) had a history of coronary artery disease, 1968 (21.1%) had cerebrovascular disease, 1184 (12.7%) had peripheral artery disease, and 2665 (27.5%) had no documented ASCVD. At baseline, in patients with polyvascular disease versus single vascular disease, mean age $\pm$ standard deviation was higher (65.1 $\pm$ 7.7 versus 63.5 $\pm$ 7.3 years), more patients were male (68.8 versus 67.9%), current or previous smokers (67.1 versus 60.1%), had an estimated glomerular filtration rate <60 ml/min/1.73m<sup>2</sup> (27.1 versus 19.0%), had history of heart failure (26.4 versus 16.5%), MI (47.2 versus 39.7 %), stroke (33.5 versus 10.0%), or peripheral artery disease (47.1 versus 8.5%), and there was a higher frequency of cardiovascular medication use (95.6 versus 92.7% for antihypertensive therapy, 83.8 versus 79.2% for lipid-lowering therapy, and 79.7 versus 75.7 % for antiplatelet therapy). Baseline hemoglobin A<sub>1c</sub> was similar between groups.

Patients with polyvascular disease had a higher risk of cardiovascular outcomes than those with single vascular disease (MACE: HR 1.52, 95% confidence interval [CI] 1.33–1.73; expanded MACE: HR 1.45, 95% 1.31–1.62, cardiovascular death: HR 1.41, 95% CI 1.13–1.75) (Figure, B, C).

Liraglutide reduced MACE consistently in patients with polyvascular (HR 0.82, 95% CI 0.66–1.02) and with single vascular disease (HR 0.82, 95% CI 0.71–0.95). Results were similar for expanded MACE and cardiovascular death (Figure, C). The risk reduction in MACE and expanded MACE was similar to that of the total trial population in LEADER (Figure, C).<sup>5</sup> The corresponding data for non-fatal MI and stroke are displayed in Figure, C.

In patients without ASCVD at baseline, the HR for liraglutide versus placebo for MACE was 1.08 (95% CI 0.84–1.38), with similar results for expanded MACE and cardiovascular death (Figure, C). However, no significant interaction was found among risk groups, except for expanded MACE ( $p_{\text{interaction}}=0.03$ ), which could be a chance finding since no adjustment for multiple testing was performed or may suggest a difference in treatment effects across risk groups, driven by the group without ASCVD (Figure, C). The reason for a neutral response in patients without ASCVD could be that the baseline risk was lower, and to establish any potential effect might require a longer treatment period or larger sample size. Nevertheless, patients with T2D benefit from liraglutide treatment regarding glycemic control, potential weight reductions, and better blood pressure control.

In patients with T2D and documented ASCVD, the presence of polyvascular disease was associated with greater cardiovascular risk versus those with single vascular disease. Liraglutide appeared consistently to reduce major cardiovascular outcomes in both patients with polyvascular and single vascular disease.

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**Figure: Analysis of LEADER data stratified by number of atherosclerotic vascular territories** (no ASCVD: no documented evidence of atherosclerotic disease in any of three vascular territories [coronary artery, cerebrovascular or peripheral artery]; single vascular disease: atherosclerotic disease in one of the three vascular territories; polyvascular disease: atherosclerotic disease in two or more of the specified vascular territories). **Panel A**, Venn diagram of number (%) of patients according to number of vascular territories involved at baseline. **Panel B**, Kaplan-Meier estimates of time to first primary MACE (composite of cardiovascular death, non-fatal myocardial infarction, or non-fatal stroke): **(i)**, and expanded MACE (composite of the primary, with hospitalization for unstable angina, coronary revascularization, or hospitalization for heart failure also included) and **(ii)**, based upon number of number of vascular territories involved at baseline. **Panel C**, cardiovascular outcomes by number of vascular territories involved. Hazard ratios and 95% CIs are based on Cox regression analyses. Interaction *p*-value is for test of homogeneity of treatment group difference among all 3 subgroups (no ASCVD, single vascular disease, and polyvascular disease) with no adjustment for multiple tests. ASCVD, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease; CAD, coronary artery disease; CD, cerebrovascular disease; CI, confidence interval; MACE, major adverse cardiovascular event; PAD, peripheral artery disease.

