

Cholesterol Therapy Based on Compromised Science: My Apology for Telling You the Truth

By Simon Yu, MD

During a patient's first visit, I frequently take them off their cholesterol lowering medications. I often hear them protest that, "My doctor said those medications are for my heart. I may get a heart attack if I stop the medications."

I have to apologize to my patient and the concerned family members. I do not want to contradict their doctor's recommendations nor add to their stress and confusion. However, they need to know the whole story of cholesterol and cholesterol therapy based on "compromised science."

Recommended "normal cholesterol level" guidelines have varied over the years. They suddenly changed 25 years ago following the now famous Framingham Heart Study. My 1981 laboratory reference book listed the normal cholesterol level range for age 50 at 150-310 mg/dl. Currently, cholesterol over 200 is considered too high for all age groups.

The latest new federal guidelines from The National Cholesterol Education Program focus on lowering LDL which is considered the main "bad cholesterol." If we follow the new guideline, over 40 million American citizens will be categorized to be treated by statin drugs which translates into multi-billion dollars of cost to consumers.

The real question is who benefits? Does it really help patients? If not, who benefits from the sudden change in the latest recommendations? So, what really happened? Unknown to the majority of the public, most of the experts on the panel for the National Cholesterol Education Program, which set the federal guidelines and recommendations for physicians, were under the payroll of the pharmaceutical companies making the statin drugs.

The interpretation of the data and the recommendations for cholesterol treatment are highly compromised by that fact alone. Most physicians are not aware of this "compromised study." However, they are compelled to follow the new guidelines for hypercholesterolemia. They are compelled to recommend a low fat diet, exercise and prescribe statin drugs which are considered standard medical care.

Lowering the cholesterol level for the sake of lowering the cholesterol level does not make any sense at all. Lowering the cholesterol has been associated with violent death, strokes, premature death for elderly patients and no significant change in overall mortality. Additional side effects of lowering cholesterol include memory loss, amnesia, neuropathy and depression.

The Framingham Heart Study concluded that a "clear and positive" relationship existed between a high cholesterol level and heart disease. However, this correlation may not be as strong as indicated in the report because many patients with a normal cholesterol level also developed heart disease.

C-reactive protein, homocysteine and lipoprotein-(a) plus the cholesterol level may give a better prediction for subsequent cardiovascular problems than the cholesterol level alone. Heavy metal toxicity and hidden dental infections are also major sources of chronic inflammation and cardiovascular problems. The basic science does not support the current broad guidelines for cholesterol treatment nor the recommendations for the general population if the individual doesn't have other risk factors.

A major downfall of the current recommendations is that a low fat diet, which usually means high carbohydrate diet, leads into insulin resistance, elevated triglycerides, weight gain, and an increase in LDL, the bad cholesterol, while simultaneously lowering HDL, the good cholesterol. Most people do not exercise enough which alone would improve their metabolism and lower their cholesterol. Therefore, the only treatment seems to be to resort to using medication to meet the new guidelines.

There are many nutritional supplements that can help lower cholesterol, decrease the viscosity of the blood, improve blood flow and reduce inflammation. The most well known natural remedies are fish oil, garlic, niacin, policosanol, red yeast rice extract, vitamin C and E, flaxseed, oat, and guggal extract.

A Gallbladder/Liver flush is an excellent body cleansing program which can support a favorable cholesterol level. It can also support a favorable LDL to HDL cholesterol ratio depending on the individual. You should also remove dental infections and heavy metals from your body. You can also increase your body's metabolism and thyroid activity with kelp, iodine/iodide and thyroid glandular extracts, all of which can help support a favorable cholesterol level and ratio.

No matter how much I try to explain the above to my patients, I often get phone calls from concerned family members. They repeat their cardiologist or primary care physician's highly emotionally charged accusations against stopping the statin drugs. I sometimes get caught between the cross fire of the patient, who is sincerely seeking alternatives to the drug "solutions", and the combined force of their medical doctor and "concerned" family members.

I recommend you investigate the cholesterol controversy on your own. I hope you can see the cholesterol treatment fallacy without adding more confusion or stress to your life. If you need more detailed information, look into *The Cholesterol Myths* by Uffe Ravnskov, MD, Ph.D., www.mercola.com for Cholesterol Guidelines and www.spacedoc.net by Duane Graveline, M.D.

If you are too concerned about stopping your medications, at least take coenzyme-Q10 in an amount of 200 to 300 mg per day to counteract the side effects of the statin drugs. The Co-Q10 will protect you from developing muscle aches, fatigue, cardiomyopathy or exacerbation of congestive heart failure. Also, implement an individualized nutrition program. Lastly, gradually taper the medication to the lowest acceptable dose for which your physician will agree.

Dr. Simon Yu, M.D. is a Board Certified Internist. He practices Internal Medicine with an emphasis on Alternative Medicine to use the best each has to offer. For more articles and information about alternative medicine as well as patient success stories visit his web site at www.preventionandhealing.com or call Prevention and Healing, Inc., 314-432-7802. You can also attend a free monthly discussion on Alternative Medicine at Prevention and Healing on the second Tuesday each month at 6:30 pm. Please call to verify the date and reserve your space.



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