CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE KILLS ALMOST ONE MILLION AMERICANS each year. This number accounts for 41 percent of all deaths in the United States. In fact, cardiovascular disease claims more lives than the next eight leading causes of death combined, including cancer, accidents, and AIDS. And, despite an aggressive campaign launched by the American Heart Association to counter the epidemic of heart disease, one person dies every 33 seconds. For nearly four decades, we have relied on medical myths to guide us in our attempts to prevent and treat cardiovascular disease. We have been told to reduce our cholesterol, saturated-fat intake, and to take lipid-lowering medications. Unfortunately, these recommendations have been shown to actually increase the risk of premature death, strokes, heart attacks, depression, suicide, senile dementia, and congestive heart failure.

**Medical Myth Number One**

Most health organizations and the public at large are sold on the idea that high cholesterol is the main cause of arteriosclerosis and heart disease.

However, a growing body of research is dispelling this medical myth. The prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*, reported in 1994 that most individuals with coronary artery disease have normal cholesterol levels! Forty percent of all heart attacks occur in individuals with normal cholesterol levels. *The Journal of the American Medical Association* reports that there is no evidence linking high cholesterol levels in women with heart disease. In fact, low cholesterol levels, especially after the age of forty-seven, increase the risk of heart attack, stroke, depression, and early death. As reported in *The Journal of Cardiology*, "low cholesterol increases the risk of a heart attack."

To cite the medical experts from the famous Framingham study: For each 1 mg/dl drop of cholesterol there was an 11 percent increase in coronary and total mortality (death from all sources).

Your body needs cholesterol. Cholesterol makes up eight percent of brain-matter. It is essential for proper brain function. The importance of cholesterol is far reaching. Cholesterol is the precursor to vitamin D and other hormones that are needed for sustaining a healthy life. Cholesterol is one of the key substances at nerve synapses needed to transmit information. Cholesterol helps regulate brain chemicals known as neurotransmitters. Low cholesterol can cause depression, fatigue and neurological disorders (nerve pain, tingling and numbness).

Individuals with low cholesterol are three times more likely to suffer from depression as normal adults.

**Medical Myth Number Two**

Cholesterol lowering drugs are a safe and effective way to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

Over the last twenty years, the pharmaceutical companies have promoted cholesterol-lowering statin drugs with such fervor that they've become household names: Lipitor, Crestor, Vytorin, Zocor, and others. Sixteen million Americans take Lipitor, the most popular statin drug. Statin sales in the U.S. alone are over 12.5 billion dollars a year.

No doubt, the statins lower cholesterol levels and perhaps do lower the risk of dying from a heart attack, at least in patients who already have had one; but the size of the effect is unimpressive. In one of the experiments, for instance, the CARE trial, the odds of escaping death from a heart attack for a patient with manifest heart disease was 94.3%, which improved to 95.4% with statin treatment. This is a difference of 1.1 percent—surely not worth all the hype these medications have received, especially since the potential side effects from these drugs may include congestive heart failure.

The acknowledged side effects of statins include muscle pain and weakness, nerve damage, and a potentially fatal muscle-wasting disorder called *rhabdomyolysis*. One statin, Baycol, has been withdrawn because it was linked to thirty-one deaths from rhabdomyolysis. Interference with production of CoQ10 by statin drugs is the most likely explanation. The heart is a muscle and it cannot work when deprived of the essential nutrient CoQ10. A deficiency of CoQ10 can lead to nerve damage and congestive heart failure.
While heart attacks have slightly declined, CHF (congestive heart failure) has more than doubled since Lipitor and other statins were first prescribed in 1987. Taking statins for one year raised the risk of nerve damage by about 15 percent. Researchers studying CoQ10 have estimated that as little as a 25 percent reduction in bodily CoQ10 will trigger various disease processes, including high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, cancer, immune dysfunction, and fatigue.

Medical Myth Number Three
The drugs used to treat chest pain, high blood pressure, and congestive heart failure are safe and effective.

Nothing could be further from the truth. These drugs are dangerous. Calcium channel-blocking drugs (Cardizem, Procardia, Calan, Norvasc, and others) increase the risk of having a heart attack by five-fold.

Beta-blocking drugs (Atenolol, Inderal, Toprol, Tenormin, and others) may cause congestive heart failure, heart block, depression, type II diabetes, tingling in the hands and feet, fatigue, and many other unwanted side effects.

Diuretics increase the risk of developing type II diabetes by 50 percent.

Medical Myth Number Four
Heart surgery, including coronary bypass and angioplasty, are safe, effective, and proven procedures.

In fact, neither surgery has been subjected to double blind placebo controlled trials. The National Institute of Health (NIH) has estimated that 90 percent of Americans who undergo bypass surgery receive no benefits. A Swedish study revealed that 12 percent of those undergoing bypass suffered obvious brain damage, including strokes. Other studies have shown that the majority of patients are more likely to die from the surgery, up to 10 percent, than a heart attack. Studies also show that patients who elected not to have the surgery actually lived longer than those who did have surgery.

Medical Myth Number Five
The test to determine if someone needs heart surgery, known as an angiogram, is a safe and accurate diagnostic procedure.

Over one million angiograms are performed each year, costing over $10 billion. These tests use a long catheter with a tiny camera for the purpose of observing arterial blockages. A study that measured the blood flow in 44 blocked arteries, as demonstrated by angiogram, found that heart arteries with up to 96 percent blockage had the swiftest blood flow, while arteries with only a 40 percent blockage had a reduced flow. The authors concluded the angiogram is an unreliable diagnostic tool and should be considered worthless.

Medical Myth Number Six
Traditional medicine continues to promote these five medical myths while perpetuating the greatest myth ever: nutritional supplements are unregulated, aren't proven, and are dangerous.

This is probably the most unscrupulous myth of all. The medical journals are overflowing with studies (over 1,000 of them) that demonstrate the effectiveness of various nutritional supplements for treating high blood pressure, alone. The Federal Drug Association fought for 20 years and spent millions of dollars to prevent the following statement from being used on bottles of fish oil supplements: "Consumption of Omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease."

Fortunately, truth and justice prevailed. A recent American Heart Association's
study showed that individuals who took 1,000 mg of fish oil a day had a 41 percent reduction in heart disease and sudden death. CoQ10 supplements have been proven to be more effective in reversing congestive heart failure than traditional drugs. Normally, class IV or terminally ill congestive heart patients live only a matter of days. The majority of those receiving CoQ10 survived two years or more.

A number of studies have shown that vitamins help prevent heart attacks and strokes. Vitamin E has been shown to cut subsequent heart attacks by 77 percent. In fact, taking vitamin E reduced the chances of death from all causes by 42 percent. B-vitamins have been shown to decrease the amount of plaque in the carotid (neck) arteries by 10 percent.

Traditional medicine and its political organizations, including the American Heart Association, have failed to stop the rising epidemic of heart disease. Given heart disease’s epidemic proportions and that most of the traditional therapies commonly used to treat it may actually cause more deaths than the illness itself, it’s time to put these dangerous myths to rest.

What can you do to reduce your risk of developing heart disease?

Well, first of all, please quit being stressed out about fats and cholesterol. Stress will kill you, literally. Eat all the free-range eggs, meat and butter your heart desires. Increase your consumption of fruits and vegetables. Avoid hydrogenated oils and excess sugar. Supplement your diet with a good multivitamin and, at least, 1,000 mg of fish oil each day. Above all, avoid falling prey to the medical myths of heart disease.

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References