

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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“Cholesterol May Not Be Cause of Heart Disease”

The cholesterol debate rages on. Doctors clash over the use of cholesterol lowering drugs, with some claiming they should be prescribed more widely to prevent thousands of deaths, whereas other say they are overused. Seventeen physicians from across the world appear to have dispelled the theory that there are links between having high LDL-C levels – “bad cholesterol” - and clogged arteries. In short, doctors have found that there is no link between high levels of bad cholesterol and heart disease. And with this claim, a number of leading cardiologists say statins, taken by millions to tackle cholesterol, don't have any benefit. Their findings, published in the Expert Review of Clinical Pharmacology, suggest the drugs won't treat heart disease, as they say high bad cholesterol levels don't necessarily lead to heart disease. Experts have clashed for years as they argue both for and against statins and their effect. But while they do agree that they are a lifesaver for people who have already had a heart attack, the study, based on about 1.3 million patients' data, indicates it could be of no use as a preventative measure. Cholesterol is a fatty substance or lipid that's vital to the body's function and about eighty percent in our body is made by the liver. Dr. Aseem Malhotra, an NHS cardiologist not involved in the study said, "Having reviewed the totality of the evidence, in my view the only people that should be offered statins are those with established heart disease risk. For everyone else, the tens of millions taking the drug worldwide who don't fall into these categories, they should know statins won't help them live one day longer." Uffe Ravnskov and colleagues have concluded that statin treatment, in particular when used as primary prevention of heart disease, is of doubtful benefit. Their search for falsifications of the cholesterol hypothesis confirms that it is unable to satisfy any of the Bradford Hill criteria for causality, and that the conclusions of the authors of the three reviews are based on misleading statistics, exclusion of unsuccessful trials and by ignoring numerous contradictory observations. The assertion that statin treatment is beneficial has been kept alive by individuals who have ignored the results from trials with negative outcomes and by using deceptive statistics. That statin treatment has many serious side effects has been minimized by individuals who have used a misleading trial design and have ignored reports from independent researchers. Millions all over the world, including many with no history of heart disease, are taking statins, and PCSK-9 inhibitors to lower LDL-C further are being promoted, despite unproven benefits and serious side effects.

In the America that I love, we won't be misled in the name of profit.

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