

Cholesterol

One of the most dangerous things about following any paradigm is that it is a complete system. Over the years I have looked at many paradigms in diet and actually followed many of them. I really don't feel that science trumps nature and it is an element of our mistaken sense of domination over nature that we continue to make that same mistake to disastrous effect. So that recently, when a patient of mine gave me a present of a book by Sally Fallon called Nourishing Traditions, I was obligated to take a second look at the way we look at fats and most of all, cholesterol.

One of the realities of the political nature of our world today is that might means right. Anyone in the third world would tell you that this is so, but those of us in this western world where we tout democracy and freedom of speech are deluded enough to think that the truth will float to the top. More than that, we think that someone else is always ensuring that science and the truth are pretty much the same. However, those of us who develop some level of conscience that we should turn off the television and look beyond what we are being told, will find that the truth has been bought and paid for.

It is ironic how virtuous we feel these days when we reach for anything marked *low fat*. We watch our saturated fats and avoid cholesterol like the plague in order to live a long and healthy life. We feel guilty when we cook with lard or butter and try to do the "right thing" by bringing home gallons of polyunsaturated oils to keep those vessels clean. Why? because we've been told that cholesterol and saturated fats are going to wind up clogging up our arteries, just another statistic in the panoply of people who didn't live well enough to avoid the pitfalls of heart disease or cancer.

Like I said at the outset, for the most part as far as fats are concerned, this is our complete paradigm and from most of the research I've done since receiving that book from my patient, it's all *wrong*! Here are some conclusions I've reached since then:

1. There is no connection between levels of cholesterol and Coronary heart disease.
2. There is no connection between saturated fat and cholesterol.

I realize that choosing saturated fats over polyunsaturated ones just goes against the grain of all that we have been told and sold. But the fact remains, and I have heard it many times, we have been getting sicker since 1920; since the advent of the Industrialized Food Complex. We wanted modernity, which meant simplicity, which meant that if we spent time cooking we had less time for leisure activities. Besides that we moved to the cities so that we could earn more money to buy ready-made food which was the modern way that saved us energy and time.

When I was a kid it was every man's pride to put meat on the table for his family. Unfortunately, the food industrialized meat industry wasn't the best. Any meat that was served fresh was probably done so with lots of hormonal fattening up in the feedlots and lots of over salting and preservatives to let it sit on the shelf. Personally, I ate a lot of spam. Then in the early 50's a researcher named Ancel Keyes came out with the Lipid Hypothesis, which postulated that the reason that we were having an increase in the incidence of heart disease was because of saturated fats. Normally, this might be just another idea, but the vegetable oil and food processing industries took the questionable data and gave it legs. Soon it was scientific fact. Margarine would be better than butter and polyunsaturated oils needed to replace saturated ones. Once again science had a better idea than nature. Never mind the fact that when people depended on meat, butter, eggs etc. and processed foods weren't in existence at all, heart disease was not a

factor. Remember, the main entities behind the forcing of this new way of thinking were the very same ones that started making us sick from 1920 onward.

The Revelations

Lately I have seen a number of my patients coming in on statin drugs to artificially bring down their cholesterol. When I started looking a little bit deeper, I realized that we are spinning out of control and more than ever before we are relying on stopgap solutions to fairly common problems. The real revelation that I am going through is that we have made an enemy of cholesterol, when there is nothing wrong with cholesterol. I always thought (and I think that we were all led to believe this) that cholesterol was that thick goeey fat that was clogging our arteries. In actual fact it is anything but. Cholesterol is actually a high molecular weight alcohol made by the liver and most human cells.

What does it do?

1. Saturated fats and cholesterol give our cells stiffness and stability. Actually, in this regard when polyunsaturated fats are ingested serum cholesterol seems to be lowered. However, this is only because polyunsaturates weaken the cell walls and cholesterol is called in from the blood to repair the damage.

2. Cholesterol has a lot to do with depression and sleep because it is needed for proper function of serotonin receptors in the brain. Actually, when cholesterol is low it is seen as a probable cause for violent behavior and suicidal tendencies. Don't we all know a lot of people who struggle with their emotional stability and all the while are choosing polyunsaturated oils over saturated fats linked to animal food?

3. We actually need cholesterol for proper development of the brain and nervous system.

Mother's milk is full of saturated fat and cholesterol just for this purpose. However, western medicine in their wisdom has started putting babies on low fat formulas and soy formulas. So, if we don't want the curse of fat babies, ... let's just hope they can think. Any wonder ADHD is on the rise?

4. I've told people for years not to eat fried food or crackers or chips etc. because it is bad for the gall bladder. Gall bladder removal is one of the most common operations in medicine today. Everyone wants to do them. They're easy, and the pay per operation is good. So I was right to tell everyone to cut out foods related to trans fats, partially hydrogenated fats and to watch out for the amount of polyunsaturates they use. It's just that I thought that saturated fats, like butter and animal fats, were the same thing. But as it turns out, bile salts are actually a product derived from cholesterol. Ironic that the very substance that breaks down fats for absorption should be made by this evil material.

5. More. Cholesterol is a precursor to corticosteroids or stress hormones important to protect the body against heart disease and cancer.

6. It is also a precursor to sex hormones like androgen, testosterone, estrogen and progesterone. Interesting that so many pound conscious women come into the office and say this classic phrase, "My hormones are out of whack." I really don't think any of us knows what we mean when that is said, but if we are not introducing the raw material, it isn't going to be there when we need it!

7. Another thing that it is a precursor for is Vitamin D which has just become the latest cancer craze Vitamin. Ironically, Vitamin D is artificially made by exposing tocopherols to ultra violet light, a potentially rancidizing process, when extra Vitamin D may not be needed at all if we ate a diet sufficient in saturated fats and cut out the rest of the stuff. Of course Vitamin D is

synergistic with Calcium and all this is related to bone and nerve health. It is also important for muscle tone, insulin production and reproduction.

8. Here's the real corker: cholesterol is an antioxidant and actually protects us from free radical damage, the sources of heart disease and cancer. Moreover, in this same respect cholesterol levels are *supposed* to go up with age to ensure these very same functions. Coenzyme Q10, which is a fat soluble, shares a biosynthetic pathway with cholesterol. What affects one also affects the other, which is another one of the absurdities of a statin drug as it robs the body of this essential nutrient, the same as it is supposed to be doing to cholesterol. In fact Co-Q10, is one of the body's most important antioxidants, essential to energy transformation and almost any biochemically related function and where do you get it in nature? The answer is animal food, more particularly saturated fat. OOPS!

So What causes Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)?

If you believe as I do that the truth has been bought and paid for by interests that want a particular truth for profitability, you'll begin to understand how we've created a panacea of ideas that is not exactly glued to reality. I have even seen computer animated pictures that show small balls of LDLs (low density lipoproteins supposedly laden with cholesterol, also called "bad cholesterol) ramming themselves into the endothelium of the walls of vessels. This just does not happen! They are much too large for this to happen.

What does happen is this. A full 80% of the cholesterol in your body is made by the liver regardless of what you eat. What is true is that stable societies who have an adequate supply of saturated fats in their diet (potentially us) with a low level of refined carbohydrates and sugar (not us) and a reasonably low level of stress (definitely not us) have a very low level of CHD. Why? Because we can provide adequate stores of the materials necessary for the matrix that the liver uses to make adequate levels of cholesterol. Remember, this is a good thing. The liver puts out something called VLDLs or Very Low Density Lipoproteins to do all the functions that we talked about before. It is important to understand what a lipoprotein is all about. According to Dr Malcolm Kendrick, "Lipoproteins do not just carry cholesterol. They also carry all sorts of other fats, saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. These fats are all attached to a glycerol molecule, in sets of three, and the resulting substance is therefore called a *triglyceride*."

This ball of fat soluble material is used for maintenance and repair and as its constituent elements are used up it is slowly reduced to an LDL and when it is completely useless for any more repair it is very dense and returned to the liver in the form of an HDL (High Density Lipoprotein), which for some reason beyond all scientific reason has been designated "good cholesterol."

Now there have been lots of studies that have tried to show that there is a correlation between intake of saturated fat and CHD, but every study has shown the opposite. Every study! Let us quote William Castelli, director of the Framingham study for many years. "In Framingham, Massachusetts, the more saturated fat one ate, the more cholesterol one ate, the more calories one ate, the lower people's serum cholesterol...we found that the people who ate the most cholesterol, ate the most saturated fat, ate the most calories weighed the least and were the most physically active." Dr William Castelli 1992 (Director of the Framingham study)

So, what *actually* causes heart disease? Well, here are some factors. Australian aboriginals have the highest rates of heart disease in the world. What this elucidates is that peoples who have a hard time getting fats and cholesterol have higher rates of CHD. It also shows up in populations that are suffering high levels of stress. At one time researchers were looking at Finland's high levels and insinuating their diet, but it happen to coincide with a time when the Soviet Union forced the relocation of almost a million people to Finland. These high rates of CHD turn up in

all populations where this type of mass social stress is recorded. Who has the lowest levels of CHD? Countries like Switzerland, Austria and France, and you know what their diets are like. Yes, these countries have diets high in saturated fats with relatively stable social systems. Actually, lately in France the levels of CHD are gradually going up as they are becoming more like us, living life on the run. There is also the factor of recent unrest as shown by the riots of the last few years wherein the stress levels of social unrest are going up.

Actually a lot of evidence reveals that more actual cause of CHD is scarring of the endothelium, the inner lining, of the vessels. What has been shown to cause this scarring is a diet high in refined sugars and refined carbohydrates, chlorine in the water and stress. What actually goes to repair this scarring? Well, platelets, fibrinogen, white blood cells, oh and most of all cholesterol. One scientist reminds us of the story that a child will think that firemen are the cause of fires because they always see them where a fire is happening. Isn't western science coming to that same simple truth?

This Doesn't Make it Easier!

I am sure that you and I are faced with a new way of thinking about what the best thing to do for ourselves and those close to us really is. Even though I have accepted the reality that the low fat, high carbohydrate idea is a lie, it is just the way that is familiar to me. I'm mentally and emotionally comfortable with it. Here's what it means to me: Out with processed foods and polyunsaturated oils. I just spent a few minutes last evening making my own mayonnaise out of olive oil. I'm eating more fats, but interestingly enough, I'm not as hungry and my energy levels and powers of concentration are, I think, better. But, I enjoyed my life of eating on the run. It still means keeping up lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, for high fibre and natural sources of Vitamin C are the best ways to balance the body. Part of the reason that Linus Pauling got the nobel peace prize was in demonstrating that the acid of ascorbate was essential to the health and repair of the vessels of the body.

We want to believe that what we know and are familiar with is the right answer. I suppose that just like me, you will resist this message many times until you decide to renew the way you look at your diet. More and more we want a sense of convenience, not only in the time and trouble we take to assume control of our food choices, but in the paradigm we choose to live our lives by. Largely, I can't help thinking that there are forces out there that *want* to assume responsibility for the choices you make, and not necessarily because they are scientific truth.

The panacea of ideas is that cholesterol is the enemy and if the levels are good then they must be getting high. One of the largest selling drugs on the market is statin drugs. To some extent, on the way to "lowering your cholesterol" there is a price to be paid. First, in order to do this it "ravages the liver." It is not unusual for patients on this drug to be filled with rage, which we in Chinese medicine points directly at the liver. It is known to reduce muscle mass. Strangely, what is the heart, but a muscle. Extreme muscle pain with spasms are also a known side effect. Memory loss is another side effect, but this should not be surprising, because the majority of brain tissue is cholesterol and the myelin sheath of nerves is also largely cholesterol and as we know the whole function of statin drugs is to reduce cholesterol.

As we said before, sexual hormones are cholesterol dependent as is the proper function of serotonin and its receptors in the brain. Perhaps it is less than mere coincidence, that along with statin drugs, anti depressants, especially the class of serotonin reuptake inhibitors and sexual enhancement drugs like Viagra are the staples of big pharma. When we are concerned about mainly the health of the company's bottom line, who would want a world any different from this one?

I'm sure we've all known all along that it is far better to spend the time taking charge of what we eat, than trying to make our food choices out of a box, but everything we do involves choices. All we are saying here is that foods higher in fat and cholesterol could possibly be much healthier than one with refined carbohydrates glued together with hydrogenated or even polyunsaturated oils. As it is we're getting sicker, even when health authorities are telling us it is the better choice. Dare yourself to look beyond what you're told to think; do the research. I think you'll find it interesting.