Controversies in Cardiovascular Prevention

Answers to Simple Questions Your Patients Are Asking

Presented by: Michael J. Blaha MD MPH
May 15, 2014

What is Preventive Cardiology?

• Early identification of heart disease risk
• Prioritizing lifestyle change as the primary way to reduce risk
• Careful selection of medical therapies – do the benefits really outweigh the risks?
• Taking a broad view – strategies that work for the patients and the population
• Effective communication of health information
How Does the Population Get *Routine* Health Information?

- WebMD
- NIH
- Mayo Clinic
- Drugs.com

Why Are the Simple Questions Sometimes the Hardest to Answer?

- Lack of data
- Conflicting data from multiple different media streams (lay press, peer reviewed, etc)
- We make assumptions – “it is obvious” or “everybody knows that…”
- Sometimes we are uncomfortable talking about everyday issues (“non-medical”)
Why Is This A Problem?

- Sometimes these are the things many patients care the most about
- Opportunity lost - what we say can genuinely change behavior
- Can make doctors seem distant – “they are only when I’m really sick”
- Sometimes not saying anything can be an endorsement of patient behaviors
Goals of My Heart-Smart Living Blog

1. Answers the questions **people** really want to know about preventing heart disease
2. Emphasize lifestyle, not medications
3. Dispel rumors and misinformation about supplements and other therapies
4. Make scientific guidelines more accessible to lay readers

May 15, 2014
USDA vs. Mediterranean Dietary Recommendations

USDA Pyramid:
- Sparingly: Fats, oils, sweets
- 2-3 servings daily: Milk, yogurt, cheese
- 2-4 servings daily: Fruits
- 3-5 servings daily: Vegetables
- 6-11 servings daily: Breads, cereal, rice, pasta

Mediterranean Pyramid:
- A few times a month: Red meat, sweets, eggs
- A few times a week: Poultry, fish, eggs
- Daily: Cheese, yogurt, olive oil, beans, other legumes, nuts
- Breads, pasta, rice, couscous, polenta, bulgar, potatoes, other grains

Coffee: Friend of Foe?

Coffee: Friend or Foe?
By Michael J. Blaha, MD, MPH
Aug 30, 2013

Can you survive an exhausting workweek without coffee? If you answered "no," you are not alone. In the U.S., coffee is the second most consumed beverage after water. Importantly, coffee serves as the primary source of caffeine for most adults looking to jumpstart their day or stave off afternoon slumps. Like other caffeine-containing beverages, coffee can be mildly habit-forming.

Given the ubiquity of coffee, it’s very important to closely examine the current debate over its potential effects on the heart and cardiovascular system.

Friend: Beneficial effects of coffee!

Coffee is a complex drink it is made of over 1,000 different compounds, many of which exert health effects on the body—good and bad. The two most significant and biologically active compounds in coffee are:
Coffee: Friend of Foe?
Evidence and Take Home Message

- Coffee probably not harmful in small doses --- and may be heart healthy
- Coffee can be included as part of a healthy diet for the public and patients with increased CV risk or CV disease (JACC)
- Positive association between heavy coffee consumption (≥4 cups/day) and all-cause mortality in men and women <55 (Mayo study)
- Avoid coffee + tobacco

Breakfast: The most controversial meal of the day: Yahoo Blog
Breakfast: Evidence and Take Home Message

- Eating breakfast was associated with metabolic health and with significantly lower CHD risk in male cohort (Harvard study)
- When skipping breakfast does not lead to overconsumption at lunch or later meals, may be an effective occasional strategy for reducing total daily energy intake (Cornell study)
- Key – what is the effect of breakfast on overall energy intake

E-cigarettes: Their popularity exceeds our knowledge: Yahoo Blog

E-cigarettes: Their Popularity Exceeds Our Knowledge

Are you catching the buzz surrounding e-cigarettes? Wondering if they will help you quit smoking? Or if they are a safer alternative to a conventional cigarette hub?

E-cigarettes are becoming a partial solution for prevention deaths in the United States—about 480,000 people a year. So it is no surprise that e-cigarette devices have gained public attention. Since 2012, sales of e-cigarettes have more than doubled, to about $1.1 billion, while the number of stores selling them has quadrupled.

What is an e-cigarette?

Electronic cigarettes do not contain tobacco like traditional cigarettes. However, they are designed to rival the nicotine addiction, but without the tar and other conventional cigarette ingredients. With an e-cigarette, nicotine is inhaled through a device that simulates what you feel from a tobacco smoke. This means delivers nicotine to the “smoker” faster than gum or lozenges do. Rather than “smoking,” users call this “vaping.”

Where those cities in the public health community were once unified in the fight...
E-cigs: Evidence and Take Home Message

- E-cig use by smokers was not followed by greater rates of quitting or consumption 1 year later (JAMA)
- Use of e-cigs was associated with higher odds of ever or current cigarette smoking – e-cigs does not discourage, and may encourage, conventional cigarette use among adolescents (JAMA Pediatr)
- Cautious use in select patients for smoking cessation

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Beware: Avoid “Sitting Disease”

May 15, 2014

Heart-Smart Living

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Improving Fitness Is as Important as Reducing Fatness

By Michael J. Blaha, MD, MPH

May 15, 2014

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Are multivitamins a waste of money?: Yahoo Blog

The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and several distinguished professors from The Johns Hopkins University have spoken—and what they’re saying about vitamins may surprise you.

Estimates are that more than half of American adults currently take at least one dietary supplement. About 26 billion dollars are spent on multivitamins each year. While dietary supplements are clearly helpful for patients with certain digestive diseases, or for pregnant women, the question we will tackle here: are they helpful for everyone?
Multivitamins
Evidence and Take Home Message

No clear evidence of a beneficial effect of supplements on all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, or cancer

Multivitamins, B vitamins, and vitamins E & C showed no improvements in cognitive function

In fact, many trials have shown that beta-carotene and vitamin E supplementation increase mortality

Healthy diet!

Statins and the Brain: Yahoo Blog

Statins and the Brain: A Conversation with Drs. Seth Martin and Kristopher Swiger

By Michael J. Stolar, MD, MPH
May 15, 2014

Dr. Stolar: Did you decide to study the effects of statins on cognition?

Dr. Basha: Why did you decide to study the effects of statins on cognition?
Statins and the Brain
Evidence and Take Home Message

Statins and Cognition: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Short- and Long-term Cognitive Effects

Krisopher J. Swep}, MD, Raoul J. Maralia, MD, Roger S. Blumenthal, MD, Michael J. Blaha, MD, MPH, Seth S. Martin, MD
Department of Medicine, Division of Cardiology, Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Heart Disease, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Published Online: October 03, 2013

• Short term trials did not show a consistent effect of statin therapy on cognitive end points
• HOWEVER, long term data may support a beneficial role of statins in the prevention of dementia
• Handle patient concerns like you would for statin-induced muscle aches, consider statin holiday

Eat Your Omega-3s!: Yahoo Blog

Eat Your Omega-3s!
By Michael J. Blaha, MD, MPH
Apr 26, 2013

Many people take fish-oil supplements—the scientific term is omega-3 fatty acid supplements—because they believe that these pills have heart-health benefits. However, a recent scientific article that made national headlines questioned the use of such supplements, given their borderline effectiveness. Do I recommend them for my patients?

Omega-3s Are Essential for Good Health
It is absolutely true that our bodies need omega-3 fatty acids to stay healthy. Omega-3s are critical for maintaining the walls of our cells, for balancing the yin and yang of bleeding and blood clotting, for lowering blood triglycerides (fats in the blood), and for limiting inflammation.
Eat Your Omega-3s!
Evidence and Take Home Message

- Omega-3 FA consumption as part of a healthy diet improves vascular and cardiac hemodynamics, triglycerides, and probably inflammation and thrombosis
- However, supplement trials very disappointing
- Eat your omega-3s, supplement ONLY if a patient is at high risk for heart disease & cannot follow a healthy diet

Low T: How it affects heart health:
Yahoo Blog

Low Testosterone: How It Affects Heart Health

Testosterone is the quintessential male hormone; it drives a man’s energy levels, muscle growth, and of course sexual function. If some testosterone is good, more must be better — right?

Testosterone levels and aging
Testosterone levels naturally decrease as a man ages. In 2008, a study reported that men’s testosterone levels, on average, decrease by at least one percent per year. In general, doctors have encouraged patients to realize that these drops in testosterone levels can be part of the normal aging process and do not necessarily mean that one has a problem or a “disorder.”
Low T Evidence and Take Home Message

- Testosterone naturally decreases with age, naturally increases with exercise.
- In older men, and in younger men with pre-existing heart disease, risk of MI following TT may be increased (PLOS One), including in those with low serum testosterone (JAMA).
- Treat with exercise, and TT only if true hypogonadism.

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The Word on Diet Sweeteners: Yahoo Blog

Diet Sweeteners - The Official Word on Heart Health

The American Heart Association (AHA) and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) are the leading organizations of their kind in the world. Their dismaying comments on trans fats, and endorsement of foods like olive oil and salmon, have helped shape food choices in America. So why have they been silent on the topic of diet sweeteners?

Only recently have there been enough high-quality trials to make a "scientific statement". On July 9th, the AHA and the ADA released a joint statement cautiously recommending "non-nutritive sweeteners" – like stevioside (NexisSweet) and sucralose (Splenda) – as replacements for sugar in the diet.

No conclusive evidence whether NNS affect appetite, energy balance, body weight, or cardiometabolic risk factors

However, NNS used in a structured diet to replace added sugars may lead to modest energy intake reductions and weight loss

Use as a gateway to water – don’t lose your taste for water!

May 15, 2014
Summary – Addressing the Simple Questions Patients Ask

• We should strive to improve talking about these simple questions with our patients – or someone else will!
• Incredible opportunity to influence health
• Don’t ignore other pills people take – misinformation might interfere with adherence!
• [http://health.yahoo.net/experts/heartsmartliving](http://health.yahoo.net/experts/heartsmartliving)

Summary – Take Home Points

• **Diet** – Mediterranean Diet
• **Coffee** – May be healthy
• **Breakfast** – Don’t skip if calorie neutral
• **E-Cigs** – Be very cautious!
• **Physical Activity** – Stress reduce sitting and fitness over fatness
• **Multivitamins** – Discourage routine use
• **Statins** – No cognitive concerns
• **Testosterone** – Only for hypogonadism, not “Low T”
• **Diet Sweeteners** – Official OK as gateway to water