Sub-clinical Hypothyroidism Increases Heart Disease Risk in Older Women

Hypothyroidism has been shown to be a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Now, research appearing in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2000; 132(4):270-8) shows that subclinical hypothyroidism and thyroid autoimmunity can also increase the risk of heart disease. In subclinical hypothyroidism, patients do not have the symptoms of hypothyroidism, but their blood tests indicate an underfunctioning thyroid. Women in the study had a 70% higher chance of having hardening of the aorta (the largest artery in the body), and more than two times the risk for a heart attack than the group with normal thyroid hormone levels. It is estimated that 17% of all older Americans have subclinical hypothyroidism.

In the study, even after statistically adjusting for all the other factors affecting heart disease risk -- including weight, smoking, cholesterol levels, and blood pressure -- women with hypothyroidism were 70% more likely to have hardened aortas than those with normal hormone activity. They also had more than twice the risk of heart attack. Having autoimmune hypothyroidism increased the risk even further. The researchers concluded that subclinical hypothyroidism is a strong indicator of risk for atherosclerosis and myocardial infarction in elderly women.

Thyroid Support from Biotics:

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- **MEDA-STIM** - This is an herbal/nutritional composite designed to help support the conversion of T-4 to T-3. Meda-Stim has also been found to be effective with some cases of P.M.S. and symptoms of mild depression that often accompany thyroid hypofunction as well as some cases of autoimmune thyroid problems (Hashimoto’s).

- **THYROSTIM** - Source of vitamins, minerals, glandular components and other nutrients known to support thyroid and anterior pituitary function.

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Thyroid Disease: Many Americans are Undiagnosed

A study appearing in *Archives of Internal Medicine* (Arch Intern Med. 2000;160:526-534.), says that 13 million Americans may have thyroid disease and not know it. Of more than 25,000 participants in the study, nearly 12% had abnormal serum TSH levels. The screening found that about 9.5% of the subjects had hypothyroidism and about 2% had hyperthyroidism. Just under 10% of those tested had an undiagnosed thyroid problem. This extrapolates to 13 million Americans nationwide with an undiagnosed thyroid problem.

There is a link between sub clinical hypothyroidism and cardiovascular disease. According to the study, even a slight decrease in thyroid function can cause increased cholesterol levels. As many as 10% of Americans with high cholesterol (98 million) may have the condition because of an under active thyroid.
Smoking and the Thyroid

Tobacco smoke may have as many as 4000 different chemicals, depending on the type of tobacco and how it is smoked. At least 60 of these chemicals are toxic. Smoking can affect thyroid function. One component of tobacco smoke, thiocyanate, (which is derived from hydrogen cyanide), increases iodine excretion and inhibits iodine uptake by the thyroid. Thiocyanate also inhibits thyroid hormone synthesis. Hydroxypyridine metabolites and benzpyrenes may also interfere with thyroid function.

Some studies show smoking to increase thyroid function, while others show it to suppress thyroid. The authors suggest that this variation may be related to iodine intake—low intake giving a tendency for smoking to lower thyroid function. Smoking seems to have negative effect on the thyroid gland seems when thyroid function is slightly compromised. Smoking may contribute to the high incidence of subclinical hypothyroidism – 10% in some studies.

In patients with hypothyroidism, smoking has no effect on blood levels of thyroid hormone. However, smoking may possibly aggravate both the symptoms and biochemical effects of hypothyroidism. There is also evidence that smoking increases the risk for contracting Graves’ disease. It may also sensitize retro-orbital tissue to whatever factor causes ophthalmopathy.

Cognitive Decline and Essential Fatty Acids

Dietary intake of fish and omega-3 fatty acids has been associated with lowering the incidence of Alzheimer's disease. Research appearing in Achieives of Neurology (2005; 62(12):1849-53) looked at the cognitive decline associated with age and its relation to diet. Subjects were given four standardized tests. Cognitive evaluations were performed three times over six years of follow-up. Their diets were assessed by a food frequency questionnaire. Fish consumption is associated with improvement in cognition.

Research appearing in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, (2005; 81(2):508-14) indicates that eating food that is high in vitamin E may offer protection against Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline. The study involved over 1,000 participants age 65 or older who were given four standardized tests. Their diets were assessed by a food frequency questionnaire. Fish consumption is associated with improvement in cognition.

BIO-MEGA 3 – Each capsule contains 1000 milligrams of natural marine lipid concentrate. A source of fish oil that is free of dioxin and mercury. Because of pollution, fish oil quality is a very important issue.

Diabetes Risk is Related to the Type of Fat you Eat

According to research published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition June 2001;73:1001-1002, 1019-1026, Trans fats, the kind found in a lot of packaged food, like cookies, crackers, certain dressings and much processed food can increase the risk for developing type II diabetes. Trans fats can be found in food with the words “hydrogenated oil” and “partially hydrogenated oil” on the label. Trans fats are also found in many margarines. Researchers followed 84204 women aged 34–59 with no diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or cancer in 1980. Detailed dietary information was assessed at baseline and updated in 1984, 1986, and 1990 by using validated questionnaires. As little as a 2% increase in calories from trans fats raised the risk of developing type II diabetes by 39%. Increasing calories from polyunsaturated fats by 5% lowered the diabetes risk by 37%.
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Getting patients to understand the connection between diet and their condition is often difficult. Let us help you.

Clinical Pearl Jam

I hope you enjoyed last month’s use of onions for children with ear infections. The idea of this column is for our readers who practice natural health care to contribute some of the clinical pearls that they have discovered over the years.

This tidbit is one that I first heard from Dr. Harry Eidenier, with respect to vitamin B₁₂. Most of us know that serum B₁₂ levels are not very accurate and that methylmalonic acid is a pricey test. But we all know that B₁₂ and folic acid deficiencies can lead to a macrocytic anemia. What Dr. Eidenier pointed out is that a patient doesn’t suddenly come down with macrocytic anemia and that a patient with an MCV greater than 90 probably needs B₁₂ and folic acid. If you have a patient who is fatigued, has poor memory, is depressed (B₁₂ deficiency is one of the most common causes of depression in older people), and they have a large MCV, a couple of B₁₂ 2000 Lozenges each day will work wonders. In an older person with CRS (Can’t Remember Stuff), you can add a little Neuclozyme Forte to the B₁₂, and you would have done that individual a great service.

So all of you talented practitioners out there, e-mail your clinical pearls to 1arborvitae@comcast.net.

Thanks, Paul G. Varnas, DC, DACBN

Wheat Sensitivity Can Cause Severe Headaches

According to the results of a study published in the journal Neurology (February 2001;56:385-388), limiting gluten (a protein found in wheat, oats, barley, rye and spelt) could reduce symptoms of severe headaches. The study was small, but the results showed that the removal of gluten helped seven of nine patients participating in the study.

Magnetic resonance imaging scans suggested the participants had inflammation in the central nervous system. Nine of the ten patients tried a gluten-free diet, and seven stopped having headaches. Two other patients had some improvement by switching to a gluten-free diet, but not a complete resolution of symptoms.
Useful Products from This Month’s Newsletter

**GTA** - Source of 5 mgs of porcine thyroid glandular. Use for primary thyroid hypo-function.

**MEDA-STIM** - This is an herbal/nutritional composite designed to help support the conversion of T-4 to T-3. Meda-Stim has also been found to be effective with some cases of P.M.S. and symptoms of mild depression that often accompany thyroid hypofunction as well as some cases of autoimmune thyroid problems (Hashimoto’s).

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**BIO-MEGA 3** – Each capsule contains 1000 milligrams of natural marine lipid concentrate. A source of fish oil that is free of dioxin and mercury. Because of pollution, fish oil quality is a very important issue.

**BIOPROTECT** - A multiple nutrient formula designed to provide broad-spectrum anti-oxidant support. Unlike the synthetic beta carotene or mixed carotenoids found in other products, BioProtect provides a full spectrum blend of the natural carotenoids (beta-carotene, alpha carotene, lycopene, zeaxanthin, cryptoxanthin and lutein).

**A.D.P.** - Standardized extract of oregano, emulsified in a sustained release form. Useful in toxic bowel syndrome, parasites, candida and other fungal/yeast problems of the bowel and genital-urinary tract. Also useful for upper respiratory bacterial or viral infections.

**B-12 2000 LOZENGES** - 2000 micrograms per lozenge with 800 micrograms of folic acid and 2 mg of pyridoxal-5-phosphate (B-6). Use with anemia, chronic fatigue, homocystinuria, digestive inflammation, low serum uric acid, elevated MCV or MCH, chronic debilitating problems, diabetes, neuro-muscular disorders.

**BIO-C PLUS** - Contains mixed ascorbates (500 mg) and 100 mg of citrus lemon bioflavonoids. Because the product contains mixed ascorbates, it is less likely to cause digestive distress.

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**B₁₂ Deficiency or Alzheimer’s?**

Mark Goodman Ph.D. believes that many patients diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease actually have dementia caused by a lack of vitamin B₁₂. He is quoted in an interview by Kirk Hamilton that appeared in *Clinical Pearls*, saying, “I initially suspected vitamin B₁₂ limits were too low, when I encountered on consultation, geriatric patients admitted with Alzheimer’s diagnosis whose frontal lobe functioning was obviously intact. This is inconsistent with Alzheimer’s diagnosis. They were exhibiting other global neuropsychological deficits with a systemic/metabolic profile.”

Many elderly individuals who are sub clinically B₁₂ deficient. Many times these patients have normal blood levels of B₁₂. He points out that people who are B₁₂ deficient experience neurological changes before there is changes in their blood count. High doses of vitamin B₁₂ are without any serious adverse side-effects. Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency is fairly common in older people. Even when the tests for B₁₂ levels are normal, symptoms like forgetfulness, fatigue and depression respond to B₁₂ supplementation. Dr. Goodman’s point is that the symptoms of this deficiency can be so severe that the patient is often diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease—even when the blood tests for B₁₂ are normal.

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**Name that “Food”**

Diet and lifestyle play a large role in health and disease. Many of the things that pass for food in our society act to undermine our health.

Dietary indiscretion can cause health problems. People with chronic health problems are often surprised at how much better they do when they pay close attention to diet.

Look at the information taken from the label of a commonly consumed “food” and see if you can guess what it is: *Sugar, modified whey, corn syrup, cocoa (processed with alkali), partially hydrogenated soy bean oil, nonfat dry milk, less than 2% of: salt, dipotassium phosphate, carrageenan, artificial flavor.*

Answer on page 6
Fatigue and Body Pain may be Linked to Chronic Sinusitis

Research published in *Archives of Internal Medicine* (2003;163:1832-1836.) and performed by scientists at Georgetown University Medical Center, shows a link between fatigue, unexplained pain and chronic sinusitis. A study conducted at Harvard had shown that fatigue and pain scores of sinusitis patients were similar or worse than a group 20 years older with lung disease, congestive heart failure, or back pain. According to the CDC, 32 million Americans suffer from sinus problems.

On average, sinus symptoms were nine times more common in patients with unexplained chronic fatigue, and six times more common in patients with unexplained chronic pain than in the control group. Sinus symptoms were also more common in patients with unexplained fatigue than in patients with fatigue explained by illness. Unexplained fatigue can therefore be more closely associated with sinusitis than are other types of fatigue.

More than 20% of the subjects in the study met the criteria for a diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome. Most of the chronic fatigue syndrome patients had sinus symptoms. Many noted a sudden onset of their illness, something they have in common with patients suffering with sinusitis.

One product that is sometimes useful for people suffering sinusitis is ADP. ADP is an emulsified oregano extract, and ADP is an acronym for “Anti Dysbiosis Product”, and has been used to kill intestinal yeast and parasites. Some practitioners, however, have found it very useful for treating upper respiratory infections and sinusitis.

Fatty Acid Consumption may Affect the Immune System

The type of fat in the diet does affect the immune system and inflammatory processes. To quote research appearing in the *British Journal of Nutrition* (2002; 87 Suppl 1:S59-67) “Due to the regulatory impact on different processes of inflammatory and immune cell activation n-3 fatty acids provide positive effects on various states of immune deficiencies and diseases with a hyperinflammatory character, among which selected examples are presented.”

One example of research that shows that the type of oil consumed in the diet can have an effect on the immune system is a recent study, *(An Med Interna. 2005; 22(7):323-5)*, which showed a relationship between fatty acid consumption and CD4 (a type of white cell important to the immune system—CD4 levels are reduced in AIDS patients) levels in AIDS patients. This was a small study, involving 40 patients, 24 men and 16 women. The mean age was a little over 37 years. The researchers concluded that, in patients with HIV infection, consumption of omega-3 fatty acids was linked to an increase in CD4 count.

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy and Vitamin C

The cause of reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD) is unknown, but it is generally associated with previous fracture or other injury. Symptoms last well beyond a normal recovery phase and are usually severe and debilitating. The patient is suffers with severe, persistent aching pain, swelling and coldness in the affected limb. According to research published in the *Journal of Family Practice*, (2000; 49:268-269) taking vitamin C daily after an injury can help prevent development of RSD. People who did not take vitamin C were over three times more likely to develop RSD than those who took over 500 milligrams of vitamin C each day for two months after the initial injury event.

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Antioxidants and Essential Fatty Acids are Beneficial for Pain and Inflammation

A combination of antioxidants and essential fatty acids may be an effective treatment for the inflammation in injuries commonly like 'tennis elbow' and 'golf elbow'. A physiotherapist with Denmark's Olympic Committee recently conducted a study in order to document the anti-inflammatory properties of this new treatment, which was tested for the first time in 1996 on a group of rowers from Denmark's National Rowing Team.

Antioxidants neutralize the free radicals. This limits their destructive impact, which is why athletes must make sure to get adequate amounts of antioxidants to protect themselves against stress injuries. Essential fatty acids are important since they support the body's production of beneficial type 1 and type 3 prostaglandins, those which counteract pain and inflammation.

If you suffer from an inflammatory disease like rheumatoid arthritis (RA), the type of fat in the diet can alter the immune system's inflammatory response. According to research done by Dr Richard Sperling of the Brigham and Women's Hospital, fish oil may reduce inflammatory substances produced by white blood cells.

The intake of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs—like fish oil) in many industrialized countries is relatively low and its increased consumption has protective and modifying effects on such diverse conditions as atherosclerosis, ventricular arrhythmias, multiple sclerosis, major depression and inflammatory and autoimmune diseases. In addition, n-3 PUFAs have been shown to alleviate pain in patients with rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease and in a number of other painful conditions.

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