

Terry Talks Nutrition

IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF AMERICA



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Terry's Bottom Line

Nutritionist and researcher Mary Enig, PhD, was a health pioneer and a bit of a rebel. Back in the 70s and 80s, she spoke out against low fat diets and the link between cholesterol and heart disease despite heavy criticism and name-calling. One of the first to call out the dangers of trans fats, Dr. Enig was an expert in lipid chemistry and how fats contribute to health and disease. Today, more and more research is showing that Dr. Enig was right. Dr. Enig died this past year. During Heart Month, we honor her by reposting this article Dr. Enig originally wrote for the Weston A. Price Foundation, where she served as Board Member Emeritus.



By Mary Enig, PhD

"The Soft Science of Dietary Fats," by Gary Taubes, in the March 30, 2001 issue of *Science*,¹ exposes the shenanigans of the 1970s McGovern Senate Committee staff and the follow-on by various government agencies that gave us the anti-fat, anti-cholesterol dietary goals and guidelines. This exposé adds to the material in "The Oiling of America"² by Enig and Fallon and *The Cholesterol Myths*³ by Ravnskov. Taken together, these works provide substantial food for thought.

Blood cholesterol levels between 200 and 240 mg/dl are normal. These levels have always been normal. In older women, serum cholesterol levels greatly above these numbers are also quite normal, and in fact they have been shown to be associated with longevity. Since 1984, however, in the United States and other parts of the western world, these normal numbers have been treated as if they were an indication of a disease in progress or a potential for disease in the future.

As a result of some of this misinformation, which was purposefully planted by the leadership of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) in 1984, many hundreds of thousands of people are treated with expensive medications to prevent the development of a non-existent illness. If the medications were only expensive and not life threatening, their use could no doubt be shrugged off as a harmless snake oil pharmaceutical scam; but, in fact, these are thoroughly dangerous medications for both physical and emotional reasons—for physical reasons because their use can lead to serious untreatable diseases such as liver cancer, and for emotional reasons because their use perpetuates the myth that cholesterol is dangerous and evil.

In his book *The Cholesterol Myths*, Dr. Uffe Ravnskov tells us what happens to an older woman who has normal high serum cholesterol levels. When her blood is tested in a forced cholesterol checkup, the cholesterol myth is used to justify treatment of

her nonexistent disease state and she loses her vibrant state of good health.

The official advice to lower serum cholesterol levels has brought about numerous supplements with the attached claim that consuming them will lower cholesterol. This further supports the myth of cholesterol as an undesirable component of body and diet. In fact, the body uses cholesterol to repair and to protect. When improvement to the health of the body brought about by good changes in lifestyle or diet results in a lowering of serum cholesterol, it can be counted as an example of the body no longer needing the extra circulating cholesterol. The repair has been accomplished.

A month after the exposé in *Science*, the NHLBI responded by lowering its recommended "at risk" cholesterol level and increasing the number of people it wants to put on cholesterol lowering drugs. But there may be hope that the truth will win. Independent thoughtful researchers have continued to point out that there is a real need for correcting the wrong advice given to the public regarding the consumption of dietary fats. New research continues to show that the saturated fats are not a problem, that the trans fatty acids found in partially hydrogenated vegetable fats and oils really are a problem, and that the lack of appropriate balance in the diet of the polyunsaturated omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids is also a problem. Even the mono-unsaturates have been taken to task by some of the recent research. And lowfat diets are being shown to be counterproductive.

The lesson to be learned from all of this is that the old-fashioned, more saturated fats form the healthy basis of a good quality diet. And a good quality diet can help to produce a state of vibrant good health. Meanwhile, there is no need to worry about your cholesterol levels. This is a phony issue.

References

1. Gary Taubes, "The Soft Science of Dietary Fat," *Science*, March 30, 2001.
2. Mary Enig, PhD and Sally Fallon, "[The Oiling of America.](#)"
3. Uffe Ravnskov, MD, PhD, [*The Cholesterol Myths: Exposing the Fallacy that Cholesterol and Saturated Fat Cause Heart Disease*](#), NewTrends Publishing, Washington, DC, 2000. More info online at: www.ravnskov.nu/cholesterol.htm.

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