

The Yin & Yang of Cholesterol Hyperlipidemia

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I am writing this article to share my research and understanding of hyperlipidemia. The Statin drugs that are used to lower cholesterol are by far the most profitable drugs produced by the pharmaceutical companies. These drugs generate nearly 20 billion dollars in annual revenues for the pharmaceutical companies.

Consider the efforts that would be taken to conceal the serious health risks associated with taking these kinds of medications. Statin's list of side-effects include: cardiomyopathy, congestive heart failure, and rhabdomyolysis. THESE ARE FATAL SIDE EFFECTS! Could there be another way to help people lower cholesterol without the possible, unfortunate side effect of death?

First let's attempt to gain a better understanding about high cholesterol and potential risk factors on the body. When looking at lipid panel (cholesterol test) results, you will see a few values: total cholesterol, HDL (high-density lipoprotein), LDL (low-density lipoprotein), Triglyceride, cholesterol/HDL ratio, and LDL/HDL. HDL is the "good fat" and LDL is the "bad fat." These numbers are important when evaluating real potential health risks associated with elevated blood lipids. The range of lipid values (high or low) is of secondary importance to the level of oxidation in the body. Here are the current medical guidelines for cholesterol:

Lipid	Desirable	Borderline	High Risk
Total Chol.	<200	200-239	>240
LDL	<130	131-159	>160
HDL	>45	35-45	<35
Triglycerides	<150	150-500	>500

In TCM, elevated blood lipids can come from both Yin-excess metabolic patterns and Yang-excess metabolic patterns. Yin patterns will present with high cholesterol due to excess sterol lipids in the body, which reflect in the high blood lipid numbers.

In cases of Yang patterns, people are yin-deficient, whereas the body is struggling to maintain normal blood lipid levels, in an attempt to maintain homeostasis. The lipids are being stripped from every part of the body so that the blood will have enough for cellular metabolic processes.

Yin-hyperlipidemia (excess yin) is relatively safer than Yang-hyperlipidemia (yin deficient). The Yin condition will respond well to PUFA (polyunsaturated fatty acids)

like fish oils, flax seed oil, etc. Green tea, a low-cholesterol diet, avoiding dairy (sterol fats), and regular exercise will most certainly bring down the cholesterol levels. The idea is to increase PUFA's (omega 3 & 6) which are nutritionally deficient, and to reduce sterol fat intake which is in excess. Excessive anti-oxidant use will make this condition worse.

The same regiment will do little to help correct the Yang type of hyperlipidemia. These people will generally have more serious health risks due to increased oxidation including: heart disease, stroke, cancer, MS, etc. Treatment is aimed at nourishing yin in the form of sterol fats. This means including milk, butter, cheese, boiled eggs, etc., in the diet will correct this condition. In addition to nourishing yin to regulate the cholesterol numbers, the yang-type condition will tend to have varying degrees of oxidation. EFA's will make this condition worse, and antioxidants will not only improve the condition, but safeguard against other serious health risks and premature aging.

From a metabolic standpoint, people with Yin hyperlipidemia tend to have too little cellular oxidation and are in a "reduced" metabolic state (net loss of electrons- oxidation is a net GAIN of electrons). Like all TCM patterns, the underlying pattern (Yin or Yang) must therefore be diagnosed and treated, rather than focusing on lowering the lipid numbers.

Blood sugar levels also play a large role in the formation of cholesterol and hyperlipidemia. Excess refined sugar, polyunsaturated fats (vegetable oils), and alcohol consumption are among the biggest culprits for elevated cholesterol. Reduce these and the cholesterol should come down. Getting your patients to agree to do this may pose yet another challenge. Many people have been basically told by their MD's and the pharmaceutical companies that they can eat whatever they want and their cholesterol-lowering medication will eliminate the risk of health problems. Putting in the time to educate others about the real issues surrounding high cholesterol could save many lives!

Oxidation

Oxidation is the net-gain of electrons (free-radicals) which can cause major cellular damage to cells of the body and premature aging. Oxidation is an increase in catabolic activity, or cellular breakdown. Increased oxidation can cause systemic inflammation, coagulation, degeneration, and poor oxygenation of tissues and cells.

There are medical conditions that are related to having high oxidized cholesterol including atherosclerosis, cerebral arteriosclerosis, diabetes, stroke, and CVD (cerebral-vascular disease).

Oxidation of Lipids

The real health risks arise with oxidation of lipids, especially LDL's. These fats are highly susceptible to oxidation and can turn rancid in the body. Circulating rancid fats

throughout the body is extremely stressful to all systems of the body, especially cardiac function. No matter how high or low the lipids values are, if there is high oxidation there is a greater risk for heart disease, atherosclerosis, inflammation, immuno-suppression, and gallstones.

Natural, unrancid cholesterol is a great antioxidant! It is yin and protects the body from heat (excess or deficient) and fire toxins. The problem lies in the rancidity caused by oxidation (fire toxins) that occurs when the LDL's become oxidized. These harmful, oxidized LDL's are called "oxysterols." In most cases, non-oxidized lipids pose NO health risks!

The major concern is that recent research on Statin drugs has revealed that they in fact, deplete natural antioxidants like CoQ10, causing systemic oxidation. Although after taking cholesterol-lowering meds the numbers may reduce, as the drugs are causing rapid oxidation that can damage other tissues.

The eyes are particularly sensitive to oxidative stress. Vision loss is a very real side effect of taking cholesterol-lowering medication. In my practice, I have seen many people's vision deteriorate after taking Statin drugs. Any patients diagnosed with any form of retinal disease (macular denegation, retinitis pigmentosa, etc.) should be well informed that the side effects of the Statin drugs may make their vision much worse

Oxidation According to TCM

In TCM, oxidation is a form of "fire toxin." Fire toxins can either come from yin deficiency or yang excess/ stagnation. Of course, you should do your TCM diagnosis to determine the dominant organ(s) diseased with fire toxin (kidney, liver, stomach, etc.) You should also determine the underlying pattern of each person's condition. An accurate diagnosis will allow you to target "putting out the fire" as well as correcting the TCM pattern imbalance. Using antioxidant and TCM formulas together, you can direct the antioxidant to specific organs and areas of the body.

Determining Oxidation Levels

There are a few ways to test oxidation levels. There are companies that will check oxidation levels of both blood and urine. I personally prefer to either do this myself and/or have my patients self-monitor their oxidation levels at home. The *Oxidata*[™] urine test can be ordered online or from various supply companies. There are other ways to assess and monitor oxidation that are a bit more labor intensive, so the *Oxidata* urine test is probably the easiest way to go.

Treatment

Nutrition & Supplementation

In addition to diagnosing and treating the underlying TCM pattern, we must decide if the hyperlipidemia is a result of Yin excess or Yang deficiency. Once this has been determined, we can have the patient follow the nutritional recommendation outlines for each pattern. Exercise will also play a large roll in balancing the blood lipid levels.

Nutritional supplementation for Yin hyperlipidemia should include Betaine HCl, Digestive enzymes, L-Carnitine, and PUFA's. The objective is to facilitate metabolism of sterol lipids and increase EFA's. Supplementation for Yang hyperlipidemia should consist of CoQ10, natural vitamin E (as gamma tocopherol), palm tocopherol, and sterol fats (butter, cheese, milk, etc.). In addition, among the most important antioxidant is water (spring water or distilled water).

Remember, PUFA's (omega 3 & 6) are oxidizing and could make the Yang hyperlipidemia condition much worse. Many patients are taking these kinds of oils because they have been told that they are "good" for them. Higher oxidation and accelerated aging will result if the person is already oxidized.

Chinese Herbal Medicine

Chinese herbal formulas should be tailored to each patient but there are a few good formulas that can be used as base formulas. For the Yin excess type, Green tea can help to emulsify fats in the body and is very effective in lowering cholesterol. An appropriate base formula for this condition would be Er Chen Tang. For Yang hyperlipidemia, Si Wu Tang, in order to nourish yin. These are just suggestions. There are many other formulas and herbs that would work very well. The idea is to be clear about which pattern you have identified, Yin or Yang. Treatment of the yin-excess should be aimed at resolving dampness and strengthening the yang qi. By nourishing the yin in cases of hyperlipidemia, the body will stop transporting the limited fats into the blood and the cholesterol will stabilize.

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