

No Connection between LDL Cholesterol Levels and Heart Disease, according to Researchers

By University of South Florida

A new review of published research from an international group of physicians and researchers is challenging the half-century long belief that LDL, the so-called ‘bad kind’ of cholesterol, causes heart disease.

Published in Expert Review of Clinical Pharmacology, the review also questions the use of statins as the primary prevention tool for Cardiovascular Disease (CVD). The study could have widespread implications as tens-of-millions of Americans currently take statins to help lower their cholesterol levels and risk of heart attack.

“There have been decades of research designed to deceive the public and physicians into believing that LDL causes heart disease, when in fact, it doesn’t,” said David Diamond, Ph.D., a professor in USF’s Departments of Psychology and Molecular Pharmacology & Physiology, and a co-author of the article. “The research that has targeted LDL is terribly flawed. Not only is there a lack of evidence of causal link between LDL and heart disease, the statistical approach statin advocates have used to demonstrate benefits has been deceptive.”

Diamond, along with more than a dozen doctors, including cardiologists, from the U.S., Sweden, the United Kingdom, Italy, Ireland, France and Japan, reported that the current narrative that LDL causes CVD is based on “misleading statistics, exclusion of unsuccessful trials and ignoring numerous contradictory observations.”

The effectiveness of statin treatment as a primary prevention method has been heavily debated by researchers for years. This latest study analyzed three recently published reviews of roughly 50 years of research, refuting a number of claims and hypotheses made about the connection between LDL and heart disease, and the value of statins for preventing CVD.

While Diamond is careful not to give any medical advice, he says his goal is “to share this information with people, so they can make an informed decision when they’re considering taking cholesterol lowering medication.”

A neuroscientist by training, Diamond first began looking into diet and heart disease research over a decade ago, when he was diagnosed as being at high risk for developing CVD and his doctor recommended he take statins. With a Ph.D. in Biology, he began studying research on heart

disease and realized that the emphasis on LDL as a cause of CVD was not based on sound research. Diamond has published half a dozen papers on CVD and continues to be a vocal opponent of statin treatment. Diamond reports that he lost weight and dramatically improved his heart disease risk markers by following a low carbohydrate diet instead of taking statins.

