

CONTROVERSY  
CORRESP. &  
DeBakey

July 11, 1973

Dr. Michael DeBakey  
Department of Surgery  
The Methodist Hospital  
Houston, Texas 70025

Dear Dr. DeBakey:

The ECG Council is quoting you extensively, and I suspect misquoting you.

"He said he had found that 80% of his patients with severe occlusive coronary artery disease had had blood cholesterol levels comparable to the levels in normal people."

"When the levels are comparable it just doesn't make sense that elevated cholesterol levels are the cause of coronary artery disease," he said.

I doubt that a scientist of your repute could have missed the impact of the clear findings that "normal" levels, by any definition, in your patients, are actually high levels relative to individuals and populations free of atherosclerotic diseases. You could not have ignored that there is little overlap at all between serum cholesterols in Japan, where there is little coronary disease, and those in the U.S. And you could not have ignored the monotonously consistent evidence from our studies, Framingham, etc., that risk of future atherosclerotic complication rises by the entry serum cholesterol level, even among middle-aged adults and even in this country where the general risk is high and the entire cholesterol distribution of the population is "elevated."

These facts, which the quotations ignore, do not at all indicate that it will do much good for your patients with advanced arterial lesions to modify their diet habits. Surely other elements of their status are likely to be more highly related to their subsequent risk -- at that stage -- than the highly distorted American way.

From

C  
You have confused  
cardiogram &  
ECG!  
Enclosure  
of ECG article

Dr. M. DeBakey

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July 11, 1973

of eating. Your therapeutic actions are highly defensible but the reasoning quoted is a bit off, and I take the liberty of challenging it privately.

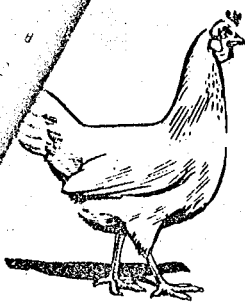
The last paragraph, is also entirely inaccurate and misleading, and I'm sure that it is not a quote from you.

"Research does not indicate that eating eggs will increase serum cholesterol in the average person or that high level of serum cholesterol is correlated with high risk of heart disease in most people."

Cordially,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.  
Professor and Director

cao



*pc Dr. O. K. Miller*  
*Blackburn*  
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**INFORMATION YOU NEED TO KNOW  
FROM -- MISSOURI EGG MERCHANDISING COUNCIL**

**NOTED HEART SURGEON DOESN'T BELIEVE CHOLESTEROL THEORIES**

A noted heart surgeon, Dr. Michael DeBakey, president and chairman of surgery of Baylor college of medicine, said at a cardiovascular disease seminar presented by Daniger Institute of Menorah Medical Center, Kansas City, MO., that he and his associates have found very little relationship between diet, cholesterol levels and coronary artery disease progression.

In a story appearing in the April 7, 1971, issue of The Kansas City Times, Dr. DeBakey said, "Much to the chagrin of many of my colleagues who believe in this polyunsaturated fat and cholesterol business, we have put our patients on no dietary program and no anti-cholesterol medications."

He said he had found that 80% of his patients with severe occlusive coronary artery disease had had blood cholesterol levels comparable to the levels in normal people.

"When the levels are comparable it just doesn't make sense that elevated cholesterol levels are the cause of coronary artery disease," he said.

The surgeon, who claims he eats only one meal a day--late at night--sleeps only four to five hours a day and practices no exercise regimen except "avoiding elevators at all possible times." He advises his patients to eat a varied diet of fruits, vegetables and meats, keep their bodies in good tone with moderate exercise and avoid anything in excess, particularly alcohol and cigarettes.

"I personally think most people eat too much and sleep too much," he said.

Dr. DeBakey thinks hearts damaged by coronary artery disease will be repaired surgically in the future, instead of being replaced.

Surgical techniques which either bypass the clogged heart artery or mechanically clean it have been perfected and he believes this approach is the most promising.

Research does not indicate that eating eggs will increase serum cholesterol in the average person or that high level of serum cholesterol is correlated with high risk of heart disease in most people.

**IF YOUR DOCTOR TELLS YOU NOT TO EAT EGGS -- ASK HIM WHY.**

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