

Current Cholesterol Guidelines may not Prevent Heart Attack

By Kathleen Blanchard RN on January 13, 2009 - 8:28am

According to a new study, seventy-five percent of heart attacks occur in people whose cholesterol levels fall within current national guidelines established to prevent heart attack. The findings, published in the January issue of the American Heart Journal, suggest that current national guidelines for LDL (bad cholesterol) levels less than 100mg/dL for those at risk for heart attack, and less than 130mg/dL for the general population, should be scrutinized more closely.

According to Dr. Gregg C. Fonarow, Eliot Corday Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and Science at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and the study's principal investigator, "Almost 75 percent of heart attack patients fell within recommended targets for LDL cholesterol, demonstrating that the current guidelines may not be low enough to cut heart attack risk in most who could benefit."

The study looked at patients from 541 hospitals across the United States, analyzing data from 136,905 patients hospitalized for a heart attack between 2000 and 2006 with documented cholesterol levels. The patients analyzed represented fifty-nine percent of total heart attack related hospital admissions.

The results showed that 72.1 of patients with no risk factors, such as diabetes or prior heart attack also had LDL cholesterol levels less than 130mg/dL. In addition, 17.6% of patients hospitalized had a history of heart attack had LDL cholesterol levels below 70 mg/dL. Only 21% of the patients hospitalized were on cholesterol medication, though over half had known heart disease. Almost half of the patients studied who were in the hospital for heart attack, had LDL levels considered optimal (less than 100 mg/dL).

The authors say that current cholesterol guidelines fail to recognize patients who are at risk for a first heart attack.

The authors recommend a closer look at current cholesterol guidelines for the prevention of heart attack. New guidelines for LDL cholesterol levels are needed, in addition to better therapies to help raise HDL levels in patients who have a history of heart attack.

Source: Most heart attack patients' cholesterol levels did not indicate cardiac risk