

## Atherosclerotic Heart Disease can be Reversed: The Best News No One Wants to Hear

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My father had his first heart attack in 1993. He was whisked off for a quintuple bypass procedure quicker than my hastily arranged flight could arrive in Salt Lake City. I entered his hospital room to find him waking up and being served a plate of scrambled eggs. He happily ingested his portion of cholesterol laden yellow nuggets and proclaimed he had a new lease on life. Smiling, he said, "I should get 10 more years out of this new heart!" When I questioned the wisdom of giving a patient with severe atherosclerotic disease a plate of high cholesterol food I was told that patients need protein after surgery. "But," I meekly interjected, "don't you think it is important that he learn NOT to eat this kind of food?" However, the hospital did not view dietary education as important, and made no effort to provide low cholesterol foods to their heart patients.

I graduated from the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine in 1989, and I remember being impressed by one of our professors: a surgeon who was embarked on a study of diet and cardiovascular disease. Last year I returned for my 25th medical school reunion, and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn gave us presentation of his research findings. I was amazed to see images showing the reversal of coronary atherosclerotic disease in very severely ill patients as a result of a whole food, plant based diet. His program recommends a low fat, high fiber vegan-type diet with no processed foods. His wife Anne showed us a few recipes and danced about the stage stripping kale and flinging it towards the audience. It was quite a show. Afterwards we lined up for a catered lunch, and funny thing--no one would touch the skewered beef.

My dad lived on a diet of eggs, hamburgers and hot dogs. Whenever I would suggest that he eat more salad and broccoli he would become irritated and say that he was going to eat what he enjoyed no matter the consequences. He was very clear on this: he was going to eat what he liked, even if it meant he would have fewer years in which to take his pleasure. Two heart surgeries, 15 years and countless thousands of dollars later, my father died of heart disease.

It surprised me that Dr. Esselstyn's major health breakthrough has been largely ignored. Nicknamed "Dr. Sprouts", he has been relegated to speaking to small groups of alumni and running his diet center. I don't understand why a non surgical treatment that reverses atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease is not being hailed as one of the medical major breakthroughs of this decade.

Ok, dear reader, before you let your eyes wander off this page, thinking "Oh no, not another wacky fad diet", I would like to point out that there is a good reason for the popularity of wacky fad diets: Americans are increasingly obese, unhealthy, they and know it. We are trying to eat our way back to good health, but we don't know how. The current medical paradigm is not helping: rates of obesity, diabetes and atherosclerosis worse than ever, and occurring in younger and younger patients. While many diet programs are money making scams, some are legitimate, and we have to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Consider the findings of these three physicians and one cancer researcher who have converged on this way of eating (the whole food, plant based diet), and found it to reduce heart disease, diabetes and diminish the risk of colon cancer--three of the main "diseases of affluence". Two of these physicians are right here in

Northern California, quietly curing their patients with diet and lifestyle. Dr. Dean Ornish founded the Preventative Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, and Dr. John McDougall's Health and Medical Center is in Santa Rosa. The cancer researcher who advocates the plant based diet is Colin T. Campbell PhD.

These are physicians and scientists who have discovered a simple truth that runs contrary to the current medical model of pills and procedures. Because diet and lifestyle interventions are not considered medical care, these doctors have been effectively expelled from the current medical environment. Insurance companies will gladly fork over hundreds of thousands of dollars for cardiac bypass surgery, but won't pay a dime for diet and lifestyle programs. As a result, these doctors have been forced to rely on their institutes and programs to generate income.

Sanjay Gupta recently produced a CNN documentary about these physicians in which he outlines Dean Ornish's successful treatment plan for Bill Clinton, and some history about these physicians and their programs. The documentary can be found on Dr. Esselstyn's website if you are interested.

I know there will always be people like my father--people set in their ways, who like what they like, and damn the consequences. However, dietary treatment for coronary artery disease works, and there are patients who would be willing to change to a whole food, plant based diet if given the opportunity, information, and the necessary intensive supportive counseling. In fact, given the choice, it is hard to imagine many people opting for open heart surgery when they can get better, more lasting results just by eating a plant based diet.

Numerous studies have shown that coronary artery disease is as much as a food borne illness as much as salmonella or botulism. The sooner we wake up and smell the coffee....oops, inhale the aroma of green tea, ....the better.

Dr Esselstyn's website:

<http://www.dresselstyn.com/site/>

Colin T. Campbell PhD:

<http://nutritionstudies.org/about/board/dr-t-colin-campbell/>

Dr. John McDougall:

<https://www.drmcDougall.com/about/contact-us/>

Dean Ornish M.D.:

<http://ornishspectrum.com/proven-program/the-research/>

The China Study

T. Colin Campbell, PhD and Thomas M. Campbell II, M.D.

Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease: The Revolutionary, Scientifically Proven Nutrition Based Cure

Caldwell B. Esselstyn M.D.

The Spectrum

Dean Ornish M.D.