

Diagnose the case - 'cholesterol-phobia'

By MELISSA PIPER

LANCASTER — Is "cholesterol-phobia" becoming our new national disease? If we are to believe all we hear on the subject then perhaps it soon may be!

Over the last three years we as Americans, have been deluged by material (on a multi media basis) telling us on one hand that serum cholesterol, due to eating certain foods, can add to the risk of heart disease while food producers lodge adamant campaigns for fresh unadulterated meats, produce and eggs. And what are we to believe - well the question still remains open for discussion.

One agricultural commodity which has recently been "grilled" on a national level is the egg. For ever since the American Heart Association announced their "blanket theory" concerning limiting eggs in the diet for the American public, a constant battle has raged between the National Commission on Egg Nutrition (NCEN) and the American Heart Association (AHA) and last but certainly not least - the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Following the AHA's report for diet restriction which included eggs, NCEN prepared a number of ads stating that there "was absolutely no proof that eating eggs in anyway increases the risk of heart disease." The battle did not rest there however and went instead into the courts and finally came under a ruling by Federal Judge, Ernest G. Barnes.

In December of 1975, the judge ruled against NCEN's advertisements after hearing a slateful of experts who testified from both sides of the "nest" as it were. Although Judge Barnes indicated no medical expertise personally, his judgement barred NCEN from running their ads because in part he felt that there was evidence that pointed toward eggs and foods high in cholesterol as increasing the risk of heart disease.

Some previous research conducted by the American Heart Association had pointed toward possibly linking high cholesterol foods (eggs included) as leading to arterial lesions and thus adding to the risk of heart disease. Because of these studies (which to our knowledge never involved the whole fresh egg) the Association decided to make public their theory on restricting cholesterol in the diet. This concept was to aid those people who needed specific restrictions but since no testing at that time could effectively screen individuals, the overall public was encouraged to eat less eggs.

The battle between the AHA and NCEN on the point of eggs in the diet is far from being concluded and will be

discussed at a later date, however the egg issue is still being "fried and tried"

While foods from beef to butter to mayonnaise have been given the "evil-eye," eggs have certainly received much of the blame for containing high amounts of cholesterol. And while research is still looking for the answers, many leading cardiologists still claim that eating eggs will not harm the average person. In fact cholesterol is necessary for nerves in the body to transmit impulses throughout the body for without enough cholesterol the nervous system could not work. Any



Photo by Grant Heilman

*High in protein but
what about cholesterol?*

animal-oriented foods add cholesterol to the body but even if no cholesterol was injected into the system the body would still manufacture the component at a steady rate. It is also interesting to note that the less cholesterol a person eats the more his body makes.

As in any type of disorder or disease though, people who are prone to heart disease possibly through heredity should perhaps limit their fat and cholesterol intake but forcing a restriction on everyone is wrong according to some noted authorities.

Rigid diets, according to Dr. Michael DeBakey, are going to affect "only a relatively small segment of the millions of people who have the basic abnormality of metabolism which leads to heart disease." DeBakey, the famous heart surgeon, has noted many times in public speeches that eating eggs plays a minute and possibly nil role in the incidence of heart disease. The surgeon believes that metabolic functions perhaps are more relevant to the disease.

Echoing his thoughts has been Dr. Christian Barnard, the acclaimed heart transplant surgeon from South Africa. At a press conference in Chicago earlier in the fall, Barnard told a gathering of newsmen and medical officers that there was still no proof that consumption of cholesterol causes cholesterol to appear in the blood stream. "Probably the most important cause of heart disease is heredity," Barnard stated.

Both men and many of their colleagues have scoffed at the idea that eating eggs will cause a person to drop dead from a heart attack - precisely the idea many people have or as we have entitled it "cholesterol-phobia."

On the other hand, experts from the American Heart Association still believe that cholesterol consumption can add to the risk of heart disease.

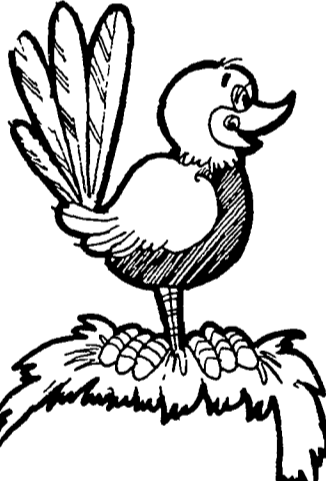
Dr. Elliot Rapaport, current president of the American Heart Association has stated, "there is no getting away from the fact that there is a great deal of evidence from many sources to back up the suggestion that dietary cholesterol and saturated fats are casually related to coronary heart disease."

Rapaport feels that a low cholesterol - low saturated fat diet is "prudent" for the American public even though the scientific proof is not firmly cemented.

Thus the controversy from both sides still persists and what final conclusion will be offered is yet to come.

Due to the concern over cholesterol in eggs, egg substitutes, void of the component, flooded the market a few years ago. Lavish advertisements from television spots to magazine glossies expounded their obvious advantage - no cholesterol. They received consumer demand but not without some scare tactics. A recent study conducted at


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