

# Study says keeping heart patients lipid levels low enough clogged with difficulties

By ACSH Staff — March 18, 2011

A new study sheds light on the difficulties physicians experience when trying to control the lipid levels in patients with coronary artery disease. Published in the *American Journal of Cardiology*, the [study](#) [1] reviewed the electronic records of approximately 10,000 patients seen at a cardiology practice between September 2008 and September 2009 to assess whether the patients were achieving recommended cholesterol and triglyceride goals. The Drexel University-affiliated Cardiology Consultants in Philadelphia recommend that patients maintain low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or “bad” cholesterol, levels below 100 milligrams/deciliter (mg/dl), but prefer a more aggressive goal of less than 70 mg/dl. The group also looked at how often their patients’ high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or “good” cholesterol, and triglyceride levels were being kept in the desired ranges.

They found that, overall, women and younger men were less likely to achieve their lipid goals; and while four out of five coronary artery disease patients achieved the minimal LDL cholesterol goal (100 mg/dl), only about one-third were able to meet the preferred standard (70 mg/dl). Despite treatment, about two-thirds of patients achieved normal triglyceride levels, and 56 percent of women and 63 percent of men achieved normal HDL cholesterol levels. The researchers conclude that combination lipid-lowering therapy, which is not used often in practice, should be utilized more often to aggressively treat elevated lipid levels, thus reducing the risk of subsequent heart events in this high-risk group. The researchers state that, “There exists a significant opportunity for physicians to more aggressively treat lipids to achieve the levels recommended by clinical guidelines.”

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross added, “This report can indeed be taken in two ways: it might be perceived as depressing to think that even a Cardiology practice has failed to adequately treat its patients considering the simple guidelines and effective treatments available. I prefer to look at it as an opportunity to significantly improve the clinical care of a large number of patients who suffer from the most common cause of death in our country — if doctors will learn from it.”

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[1] <http://www.ajconline.org/article/S0002-9149%2810%2902415-X/fulltext>