

Processed red meat being picked on again

By ACSH Staff — June 16, 2014



Heart failure affects about six million Americans. This may at

least partially explain why the media has been so quick to seize the opportunity to link heart failure with processed meat consumption. The [study being referenced](#) [1] was published in *Circulation*, the publication of the American Heart Association, and claims to have found that processed red meat consumption results in increased risk of incidence and death from heart failure.

Researchers from the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden and Warsaw University of Life Sciences in Poland, used data from 37,000 men, ages 45 to 79, enrolled in the Cohort of Swedish Men study. The men had no history of heart failure, ischemic heart disease or cancer.

Researchers had participants fill out a 96-question food intake questionnaire including questions about processed meat consumption, specifically the consumption of sausages, cold cuts (ham/salami), blood pudding/sausages and liver pate over the past year. Study participants were followed from 1998 until heart failure diagnosis, death, or to the end of the study in 2010. During this time period, about 3000 men were diagnosed with heart failure and 266 died as a result. They found that eating high amounts of processed red meat (75 grams per day or more) was associated with a 28 percent increased risk of heart failure compared to eating low amounts of processed red meat (25 grams per day or less). No association was reported between unprocessed meat and heart failure.

And of course, the conclusion was this: To reduce your risk of heart failure and other cardiovascular diseases, we suggest avoiding processed red meat in your diet, and limiting the amount of unprocessed red meat to one to two servings per week or less, said Dr. Joanna Kaluza, study lead author and assistant professor in the Department of Human Nutrition at Warsaw University of Life Sciences in Poland.

ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan is very skeptical of this study. She says, First of all, since the study data are observational, there is no way to determine cause and effect. And second, dietary recall is a weak method for assessing correlation between food intake and health outcomes as people often forget what they have eaten the day before. Furthermore, processed meat simply has a bad reputation and because this study can be interpreted to reinforce that reputation, that is what is going to be reported in the popular media. We have been saying for years that there is place for

everything in one s diet in moderation and processed meat is no different.

ACSH s Dr. Gil Ross added this: Heart failure is a major problem in our country and the western world. It s a major cause of death, albeit mainly in the older age group, secondary to hypertension and coronary artery disease. To distract attention with junk like this from this serious problem and its actual causation and treatment, is truly irresponsible and unacceptable.

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[1] <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/06/140612174620.htm>