What Does Dr. Luke have to Say About Heart Attacks?

Liu Ja Dong woke up suddenly one night about 3.00am. He often awoke during the night just because he could not sleep well. However, this night he awoke because he had severe pain in his chest and he could not breathe well. He had never felt like this before and the pain was intense. Further he was sweating and was very nauseated. He had just turned 69 years old. He had felt very well up until this night. He called his wife and they called their daughter who asked that they take him to the local hospital. They did just this. The pain resolved after 30 minutes but at the hospital it returned again and was more severe than ever. When the pain returned the pain was so severe he could not stand it. Then his heart rate got very fast and he became very dizzy and lightheaded. The doctors took his blood pressure and it was very low. They gave him many different types of medicines but they could not help him and a few minutes later Liu Ja Nan was dead. Only three hours before he was sleeping just fine in his bed at home.

Tang Ming was a 45-year-old businessman on a business trip to Xian. He often traveled. He never exercised but tried to not eat too much at meals. He was in his bedroom watching Television when he had sudden pain in his chest and fell to the floor. The other businessman staying in his room from his company came to help him be immediately realized that he was dead. He called the hospital and they sent an ambulance but they also could do nothing. Tang Ming was dead. His friend called his wife in Shanghai and told her of her husband's death. As she was crying on the phone their 16-year-old daughter came into the room and heard what had happened. The phone was hung up as both cried late into the night not ever getting to say good-bye to their husband or father.

These two men died like many men and women in the world, from heart attacks. The number of people dying in China each year from heart attacks is rising rapidly and is coming very close to the amount of people dying yearly in western countries. This is important as the number one cause of death in western countries is from heart attacks. The striking thing about this number is that it is the percentages of people dying from heart attacks in China as compared to the western countries, which is becoming almost the same.

Why are so many more people dying from heart attacks in China? What can be done to prevent this? How are heart attacks caused?

People who die from heart attacks usually have many factors, which contribute to them having heart disease. It is interesting that research shows that most people have some sort of early mild heart disease even before they become 20 years old. Let us look at each of these questions?

First, what causes heart attacks? Basically the following contribute to having a heart attack: 1. Family history of heart disease, 2. Diabetes Mellitus, 3. High cholesterol, 4. High blood pressure, 5. Being overweight, 6. Being inactive, 7. Smoking, 8. Stress, anxiety and depression 9. Poor dental care or having a lot of tooth cavities. Let us look at each one of these.

A family history of heart disease is one of the most important predictors of having heart disease in the future. If one of your parents or brothers or sisters died before they were 60 from heart disease then you will be more likely to have or die from heart disease. It is important to distinguish between heart disease a person has had from birth and heart disease we acquire as adults. Here we are talking about the second one.

Next is having Diabetes Mellitus. Those people with poorly controlled Diabetes are 4x more likely to die from heart attacks than those people without diabetes. Those people with diabetes, which is controlled, have a greater chance of dying from heart disease than those die without it die. However, Diabetes, which is controlled, is much safer than Diabetes, which is uncontrolled. Also the longer a person has Diabetes the more likely they will die from heart disease.

Cholesterol is fat in the blood. We all have it and in fact our liver makes the fat. However, people with large amounts of this fat in their blood are more likely to die from a heart attack than people with normal amounts. We get this fat from shellfish, eggs, redmeats, avocados and some cooking oils and a few other foods. Generally the weight of a person corresponds with their cholesterol. That is the higher the cholesterol the higher weight of the person and vice versa. This is generally related to the fact that the more food eaten usually corresponds with the amount of cholesterol eaten. Even though our body in the liver makes cholesterol, it is the excess amount, which is eaten which can cause or contribute to having heart attacks.

High blood pressure of all of the causes has the least correlation to causing heart attacks. High blood pressure is generally more related to having strokes. However, the other causes of high blood pressure, i.e. anxiety, stress, smoking, inactivity and being overweight all contribute to heart attacks.

Obesity or being overweight is generally related to having heart attacks. Also the more overweight someone is the more likely they are to have a heart attack. For example Liu Ja Dong mentioned earlier had been overweight for ten years but only by about 5 or kilograms. However, the two years before his death he had gained and extra 10 kilograms. More than likely this contributed to his having a heart attack. The more you weigh the more likely you are to have a heart attack.

People who are inactive or never exercise are also more likely to have heart attacks. This would be described as people who sit most of the day in their work. Also retired people who exercise little are more prone to have heart attacks. People who exercise as little as walking 20 mins 2 times per week benefit from this exercise. Certainly the more exercise a person does the more likely they are to not have heart attacks.

Smoking is one of the worst contributors to having a heart attack besides Diabetes and family history of heart disease. China has a very high rate of heart disease primarily because of cigarette smoking. China currently has 300 million smokers most of whom are men. This number is rising primarily because young women are starting to smoke. This is important because this will strongly contribute to future heart disease in China. Also, the main ingredient in cigarettes, which is so harmful, is nicotine. This nicotine is what addicts people to cigarettes

and makes them so very addictive. The many young women starting to smoke now will find it very hard to stop in the coming years. Generally the damage smoking does to cause heart attacks and heart disease is related to the fact that people smoke for many years. However, people should not be fooled into thinking they can just smoke for a year and stop. The addictive qualities of cigarettes make this very hard to do.

Stress, anxiety and depression also contribute to having heart attacks. We are not sure as to the exact reason why but we know that they do. We also know that after a heart attack having depression contributes to having more heart attacks.

Finally, is dental caries and poor dental hygiene. We are again not sure as to why this is the case but we do know that people with poor dental care are more likely to have dental problems than those without dental problems. Thus the importance of brushing teeth regularly and seeing a dentist at least once a year to clean and take care of your teeth.

Well, these are the causes of heart attacks. Clearly we see that many factors contribute to having a heart attack. Before going on we need to realize that having a heart attack is but one type of heart disease. People who have a heart attack may get better or may die suddenly, as we saw from Tang Ming. However, there is another type of heart disease, which has permanent or eternal results. That is a spiritual heart disease. What causes this type of heart disease?

The Bible says that sin, or our wrong doing before God causes this. Why do we though do this wrongdoing? The Bible says that 'the heart is deceptively and wicked beyond all else.' This type of heart is not the literal physical heart in our chest wall but the center of our thinking and belief. It is our sin though which makes us so desperately unable to turn and know God. But what difference does this make? The Bible say that 'all of us have sinned and come short of God's glory (or short of what God wants for us), Romans 3.23.' This sin is in the form of lust, greed, hatred, selfishness and pride which all of us has. None of us really like this but though we try we cannot stop doing these things. The Bible says that the result of this sin is death. The Bible says in a book written to the people in Rome around 70AD,that the 'wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6.23).' The payment for our sin is death. This is what happened to Lin Ja Dong and Tang Ming. They both died. All of us will die and the real cause is not from heart attacks but from the sin in our lives. How can we overcome this sin in our lives? The Bible says in a book called Jeremiah, which was written about 580 BC, that God will 'make a covenant with them and put his law in their minds and write in on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people…then they will all know me from the least to the greatest…I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more (Jeremiah 31.33).' We are no more capable of healing ourselves from a heart attack than we are of saving ourselves from our sins. Just as we need a doctor to provide healing for our heart attacks we need God to heal us of our sins. He did this by placing his son Jesus on the Christ.

Thus we have now seen the cause of both a heart attack in our hearts, i.e. the physical organ and having a spiritual heart attack. But why do our hearts get heart attacks. What causes a heart attack once we have smoked or not exercised and so on? Inside each artery of the body is a small opening. Even the outside of the heart has arteries. All an artery does is supply blood to

another part of the body. Thus the arteries around the heart supply blood to the rest of the heart. If one of these arteries cannot supply blood to a part of the heart then that part of the heart will have a heart attack. It is that simple.

Then what causes the heart to not supply blood? 99% of these are cause from an occlusion in the heart. This occlusion is caused from all of the things we have talked about today, i.e. high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, not exercising, obesity, high blood pressure, dental caries, anxiety and stress. What happens in a heart attack is that suddenly a part of this occlusion breaks off and occludes the whole artery and no blood supply can go through. This total occlusion after several minutes will allow the part of the heart after the occlusion to start slowly dying. This is what a heart attack is, that is the slow dying of the heart. This is what the pain is. Think of us putting a tourniquet on your arm and not letting any blood supply go through. After several minutes the arm would turn blue and start to hurt and literally start dying. The same is true with the arteries in the heart, which has the occlusion in it.

Someone may ask, what causes the occlusion to break off and occlude the whole vessel? Actually there are a lot of ideas but we do not know everything about this question. We do know that in our spiritual hearts that the cause is related to our sinning and that we are not capable of stopping without placing our hope and trust in Jesus Christ. It is not anything we do. The Bible says in a book written about 70AD, 'it is by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, so that no man can boast (Ephesians 2.8,9).'

Liu Ja Dong and Tang Ming both had physical heart attacks. They both died from these. However, like all of us they also had spiritual heart attacks that are their hearts were separated from God. You can have a new spiritual heart right now if you want to by praying the following prayer.

'Dear Jesus, I know that I have sinned and done wrong. I believe that you died on the Cross-for my sins. I believe that you were buried and later rose from the grave to show you had conquered death and that you live now and will forevermore.'

If you have prayed this prayer congratulations you are a child of God and will live forever with a new heart.