What Dr. Luke has to Say About the Cause of High Cholesterol

Wang Xu Feng was walking up the stairs to his work when suddenly he began to be short of breath and have chest pain like a squeezing across his whole chest. He generally walked up the stairs and often became short of breath. However, today was much worse and he had never had this type of shortness of breath before. He stopped and rested and the pain became a little better. However, when he started to walk up the last flight of stairs the pain became more severe than ever. He was sweating a lot and became very nauseated. He called out for help and some co-workers came to his help and carried him up the stairs and called for an ambulance. The ambulance took him to a nearby hospital where they diagnosed him with having a heart attack. Wang Xu Feng went home two weeks later but was still quite ill. During the hospital stay the doctors did many blood tests. One of them was for cholesterol. His was very high. His doctors told him this was one of the reasons, in fact the main reason, that he had a heart attack. Wang Xu Feng had never heard of cholesterol. What was the thing in his blood?

Many people around the world die from heart attacks. Heart attacks are caused by many factors. However, the primary reason is probably having a high cholesterol. What is cholesterol? Cholesterol is a fat which our liver makes and which we eat. Except for very rare genetic conditions, the cause of too high cholesterol is related to eating too much food, which has too much cholesterol in it.

What is important about cholesterol is that it is having too much of it that is harmful to you. Too little is also harmful but this only occurs in starvation states which is generally rare. Plus the major problem in starvation states is too little protein and not too little cholesterol. How did Wang Xu Feng get too much cholesterol in his blood?

First, his liver made it. All of our livers make cholesterol. This is a very complex process. The body uses cholesterol everyday as part of building part of our body. Thus we do need cholesterol. It is used to make chemicals in our bodies and make the walls of tiny cells. In fact without cholesterol our bodies would not have cell walls because cholesterol is the main ingredient of our cell walls.

Isn't it amazing how God has created our bodies so perfectly? That he created such a delicate balance that something very good can become very bad. That is how cholesterol can be viewed. The Bible speaks about this when it says, 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained form me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalms 139.13-16).

How amazing that God created us to perfectly balanced. What we have in our bodies is so perfect and what we eat can both help and hurt us. This is how wonderful God is in creating us

to be in such a perfect balance. We must clearly stand amazed at this. Not only this, but think that this is just one substance in the body which out of balance a little can causes such big problems. Why do you think God created things to be in such balance? One thing is to show us how much little things can cause big problems in life.

Sin is such a thing in life. One little sin can cause a great big problem. We see this in the very first sin on this earth. Sin is simply going against what God wants us to do. A woman called Eve caused the first sin. This story is recorded in the very first book of the Bible. That story says Eve was tempted by Satan to eat of an apple from a tree God told her not to eat from. Then she had her husband, named Adam, to also eat from the apples from the same tree. The problem is that God had asked them to not eat from that tree, i.e. to test their obedience. They both failed. Now who would have thought that eating an apple would be such a big deal? The problem was not eating the apple as much as it was disobeying God. Of having a sense of personal pride that Eve's and Adam's way and knowledge were better than God's. This is what sin is. After that time the whole world was plunged from a life of perfection and paradise to a world of sin where greed, hatred, selfishness, etc live on everyday in the hearts of men.

Let's go back to talking about cholesterol. Once we have enough cholesterol then too much is harmful. In fact up to a limit once we eat too much cholesterol our livers produce less. However after a time the excess causes problems. As we have mentioned before in this talk, some people have genetic conditions, which cause their bodies and livers to make too much cholesterol. They inherited or received this genetic condition from their parents. What can they do about this? Actually except for medicines there is little that can be done for this. However, the amount of people who make this excess cholesterol from their genetic conditions is very rare. Less than 1% of the total population.

People ask, what is cholesterol? It is simply a type of fat.

Thus most people who have excess cholesterol have it because they eat too much cholesterol. How does this happen. Well, cholesterol is contained in many foods. Eggs, shellfish (e.g. shrimp, lobsters and similar type fish) and red meat are the main foods which contain cholesterol, dairy products like butter, milk and oils. Few of us realize that the fat we eat is hidden from view, like the tip of the iceberg. For example, chocolate, egg yolk and cheeses are about one third fat. Bacon and peanut about one half fat. Pecans, certain nuts and seeds are three fourths fat. All of this fat is not cholesterol, but much of it is. One of the problems of the developed world and urban areas in developing parts of the world is that fat consumption has climbed from the recommended 20% per day to about 40% per day. This is where the problem is. People are eating not only more food but also food which is less healthy.

It is important to realize that there also types of oils, which can cause more cholesterol problems than others. For example, some oils cause the cholesterol to go up and some cause the cholesterol to stay the same or even go down. Those that cause the cholesterol to go up are called saturated oils. Thus these are not as good. Those that cause the cholesterol to stay the same or go down are called polyunsaturated oils. How do you know which oil contains which? You cannot tell by looking as all oils look the same. You simply must look on the bottle and it may tell you. Not all bottles of oil tell you which type of oil it has. In China this is

important because the Chinese cook with so much oil. This is the down or bad side to their type of cooking. Fortunate for them is that the Chinese use peanut oil, which is not as bad as other types of oils.

Why does high cholesterol cause heart disease? Cholesterol is in the blood, taken in by the mouth and made by the liver. So how does it affect the heart? Cholesterol in high amounts gets stuck to the inside of the arteries in the body. Recall the arteries are the vessels in the body, which take blood from the heart to the rest of the body. The veins take blood from the rest of the body back to the heart. Thus cholesterol gets stuck inside the arteries taking blood to the brain and to the rest of the body, for example the legs. Since the heart is also an organ of the body and needs blood it also has arteries around it. It is when these arteries around the heart get plugged up that the heart has no blood supply and thus a heart attack occurs.

Let me explain this in a little more detail. Cholesterol in excess amounts collects to the inside of the arteries. Smoking also contributes to this collection of cholesterol as well as diabetes, poor tooth care, high blood pressure, being overweight and lack of exercise However, the cholesterol is key. In fact for every two points of measurement the cholesterol count goes up the chance of getting a heart attack from higher cholesterol goes up one point as well. Thus if your cholesterol is 100% higher than what it should be then your chance of getting a heart attack will go up 50%. This is quite a significant jump.

The cholesterol inside your bodies arteries over time becomes thicker and thicker. It may get so thick that it occludes most of the artery's ability to let blood flow through. When this occurs then the part of the body, which is receiving blood, or supposed to receive blood does not function so well or may die. What can also happen is that the obstruction of the artery can occur when a piece of the cholesterol plaque in the artery suddenly breaks off and obstructs the whole artery. This immediate blockage in the heart or going to the brain can cause a stoke or a heart attack. This is a major medical emergency. Without being dealt with in a few minutes people can have permanent serious damage or even die.

The Bible also speaks of the issue of not having blood. This lack of blood relates to the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The Bible says that about 2000 years ago or around 35AD Jesus Christ, also know as Jesus of Nazareth died on a Cross for our sins. It also talked about him shedding blood for us. What does this mean to us living today? The book of Hebrews in the Bible, written about 80AD says the following about the blood of Jesus: ‘When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man made, that is to say, not a part of creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled o those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

China up until about 100 years at Tian Tan in Beijing had goat and bull sacrifices to Shang Di. This was for the purposes of fulfilling the sacrifices needed for the sins of the Chinese

people and for having good harvests. However, the Bible says that when Jesus died on the Cross all sacrifices to God were unnecessary. Why? Because by entering by his own blood Jesus Christ obtained eternal redemption. This redemption as it says is unblemished to God. Thus it can cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God. What a great promise. Jesus Christ's death on the Cross allows me to serve God and to be forgiven of my sin before God.

Just as excess cholesterol can plug up the arteries of my body and prevent blood flow, so to does my sin, or wrongdoing before God affects my relationship with God. However, Jesus Christ's death and the blood he shed for me changed that for me. By placing my trust in him I can live forever. How can I do or know this?

You may pray this prayer with me. Dear Jesus, I know that I have done wrong and have sinned against you. I believe that you died on the Cross for me and shed your blood for my sin. I believe that after you died you were buried for me and three days later rose again from the grave. Thank you for doing that for me. I place my trust in you now. If you have done that you are a child of God and will live forever.