

Letter to Medical Fraternity

Dear Colleague,

Kindly allow me to share with you my experience with an integral approach in the management of coronary heart disease, consisting of mainstream Allopathy medicines, interventions when necessary along with in-depth stress management. Conventional treatment with routine advice on lifestyle changes alone does not always succeed in preventing the recurrence. The Pooling Project Data have shown that while only ten per cent of those with more than six risk factors eventually had a heart attack, sixty per cent of those who had heart attack did have only one or none of the conventional risk factors operating in them. In one report from USA, out of 500 stented angioplastied patients, as many as 125 restenosed within six months. These stents were even genetically treated to prevent occlusion(2). The cause of restenosis was probably increased hostility score in these patients. Researchers postulated how hostility per se can affect the endothelium of coronary arteries through chemical changes.

Research findings at Duke University Medical Center, N.C., USA also support the notion that hostility plays a role in the pathogenesis of coronary atherosclerosis and point to the potential importance of interaction between hostility and other risk factors(3). Another study at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, also shows that hostility may predispose coronary artery disease patients to a more adverse prognosis.

Hostility

Hostility includes intense intolerance, extremely irritable temper, aggressive behavior, self-centeredness and cynicism. A sense of isolation breeds hostility and the hostility aggravates isolation. The hostile people are lonely. They go to parties, but cannot come out of their hostile shell to mix with others in a caring way. A hostile person ruminates in his own thoughts and is preoccupied with himself. Larry Sherwitz at the University of California, San Francisco, shows that the more a person thinks of the first person pronouns (I, me, mine, myself), the greater the risk for a heart attack. Your preoccupation with self makes you more hostile because you do not include others in your agenda.

Expressed anger is associated with increased secretion of adrenaline and noradrenaline (catecholamine-like chemicals). During caring-love, there is increased secretion of endorphins (opioids), phenylethylamine and oxytocin. These secretions are released throughout the body in a split second.

In March 1997 Dr. Mark Ketterer of Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan, USA and associates reported their findings from a study of 144 men who had angiogram positive coronary heart disease. Spouses and intimate friends of these men observed that they were excessively prone to anger, although the men under study denied getting angry. The study suggests that denial of anger is a stronger predictor of major cardiac events and death than traditional cardiovascular risk factors.

Self-centeredness, cynicism, hostility, hatred, jealousy, anger, frustration and vanity also reduce the heart rate variability (HRV) -- the most important protective factor for long and happy life.

HRV

HRV is not cardiac arrhythmia or irregular heart beats; rather it is a variation in the sinus rhythm itself as it changes from beat to beat. This beat to beat time variation is in milliseconds and cannot be appreciated in a routine electrocardiogram. It can be captured only by advanced sensitive computers. In a normal person the HRV is rhythmic with a value of more than 50 milliseconds on an average between beats. Negative emotions like anger, frustration, envy, worry, etc. cause erratic and nonharmonious HRV. Positive emotions like caring-love, appreciation and compassion allow smooth, even and harmonious HRV. The disturbance in HRV is a sensitive index of mind and body malfunction. Erratic HRV puts extra wear and tear on blood vessels and heart. HRV has corresponding changes in cellular DNA and immune system also. Increased sympathetic activity with dampening of parasympathetic pathways diminish heart rate variability and also make it erratic and nonharmonious. A Multicentre Post Infarction Research Group study found that in the patients recovering from heart attack, low HRV, less than 50 milliseconds, results in 5.3 times higher chances of sudden death. Abdominal breathing, *shavasana* and meditation bring about a reduction in the sympathetic activity and have beneficial effects on heart rate variability.

Diaphragmatic breathing helps to clear fatigue. It enhances the lymphatic flow, strengthens the immune system, clears free radicals, and increases blood pH level. It also conserves energy by switching from the ergotropic energy consuming sympathetic system to the tropotropic energy conserving parasympathetic system. In management of acute stress, abdominal breathing gives relief as quick as Sorbitrate in angina.

Heart Resonance Imaging is another technique to bring beneficial effect on Heart Rate Variability. With Heart Resonance Imaging, you replace the conditioned reflex of anger with the reflex of caring-love. This cannot be done as a statement, declaration, or pep

talk. It has to be developed as a biological reflex. If you diligently practice it, you will be able to develop the new reflex. If you stay with it every day for a week, you will master the new reflex. You will enjoy the unconditional caring-love state for the second time in your life - the first being when you were a child. The Heart Resonance Imaging steps are simple. During meditation:

- Focus awareness on your anatomical heart.
- Experience caring-love towards a particular person.
- Stay anchored to your heart.
- Observe your breathing in your belly as you stay anchored to your heart.
- Repeat these drills until you are able to shift your centering from your mind to heart and to belly effortlessly.

Benefits of HRI (Heart Resonance Imaging)

- HRI balances your Yin-Yang cycles.
- Your heart heals as shown by heart rate variability.
- Your immune system becomes stronger.
- You resolve conflicts in your mind and you feel better.
- You feel less stressed and more energized.
- You develop biologically effective altruism. This is healing by your internal pharmacy. You upgrade your emotions from apathy to empathy and from anger to caring-love. HRI may be practised whenever one interacts with another person.

Moderate stretching and relaxation exercises followed by shavasana and meditation bring about the desired relaxation with all the helpful changes, viz. increased secretion of endorphins, decreased formation of lactic acid and reduction in secretion of noradrenalin and adrenalin. Balance between parasympathetic and sympathetic or Yin and Yang (Chinese) or right and left brain will promote health. Yin and Yang in Chinese are used for female and male characteristics, and the right brain stands for intuitive instinct and left brain for hard logic. Briefly, in relaxation mode parasympathetic tone is more than sympathetic, Yin is greater than Yang and the right brain is more active than the left. While in the stress mode the reverse occurs.

Universal Healing Program

During the last over two decades (since 1991) thousands of patients have participated in our program. And many more have used our books and cassettes with advantage. The components of the program are: diet counseling, walking at moderate pace on a level

ground for about 30 - 40 minutes daily, stretching and relaxation exercises leading to progressive deep relaxation - shavasana, meditation and visual imagery, and group discussion with emphasis on sharing of feeling. The 5-point program works in unison, each one supporting the others. Our experience with this program corroborates the research findings of Dr. Dean Ornish and others in the USA. It has been observed that after practicing it over a period of six weeks, a majority of the participants not only reports reduction in the number of episodes of anginal pain but is also motivated to make lifestyle changes, such as, giving up smoking and alcohol, and choosing low fat vegetarian diet rich in complex carbohydrates. Within three months, their level of hostility also drops markedly. Most of them show improvement in the heart's ability to pump, that is, left ventricle ejection fraction shows appreciable increase in 2-D echo-studies. The program has come to be so known as universal healing program (UHP), as while it aims at healing coronary disease, it also results in healing of the individual as a whole.

Dr. Larry Dossey*, M.D., the most seminal thinker of USA on mind-body medicine, in his message for the 6th anniversary of UHP, wrote:

“There is a saying here -- “the cream rises” -- suggesting that the most valuable things become visible and endure with time. The Universal Healing Program has indeed risen to the top, and I am happy to offer my congratulations on your approaching sixth anniversary. Your approach has now been validated and replicated in medical institutions around the world. The Universal Healing Program is here to stay because of a simple reason: *It works* and is based on solid scientific principles. Therefore, to your professional colleagues in India, **I say this: This is the medicine of the future; become familiar with it and allow it to influence your work with those you serve.**

“I want you to know, Ramesh, that in the past two years eleven major medical schools in the US have adopted courses devoted to ‘spirituality and clinical practice,’ and fifty percent of our medical schools have expressed interest in creating these programs. This is truly a historic development. Herein lies the future of medicine: combining our best science with eternal spiritual insights. This approach alone is healing; this approach alone will endure. Your program is lighting the path into the next century and is helping many acquire the wisdom we shall need to survive.”

Five thousand years ago, Charak the great Indian sage-physician, gave his prescription for health and wellbeing. He said, “He only can remain healthy who takes regulated diet and exercise, who deliberates all his actions, who controls his sensual pleasures, who is generous, just, truthful and forgiving and who can get along with his kinsmen”. This

wisdom of the sage has today been amply verified by our own experience with the Universal Healing Program and by the scientific investigations abroad, mainly in the USA.

Dear friends, the inescapable conclusion from our experience with UHP and the scientific investigations from the western world is that successful treatment and containment of coronary heart disease require both conventional allopathic treatment and strengthening of the spiritual qualities of man. UHP has proved to be a powerful tool for in-depth stress management to increase spiritual strength (ISMSS). Let us practise abdominal breathing, *shavasana* and meditation and recommend them to our patients in our prescription.

Yours sincerely,

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* Dr. Larry Dossey, M.D. is former co-chair, Panel on Mind/Body Interventions, Office of Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, USA. & author: Prayer is Good Medicine; Healing Words; Meaning & Medicine; Recovering the Soul; Space, Time & Medicine.

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