

A Doctor with a Mission

At a time when popular and even medical press keep on reporting incidences of cardiac surgeons resorting to needless surgical intervention, Dr. Ramesh I. Kapadia of Ahmedabad recommends surgery as the last resort.



He firmly believes that in stable coronary heart disease (CHD), a combination of drugs, yoga, exercises, relaxation techniques, stress management and altered lifestyle can save lives without resorting to expensive and traumatising interventions like angioplasty and bypass surgery.

His belief is bolstered up by randomized studies that confirm that for a large number of patients undergoing surgical interventions, the survival rate is not better than in those managed by medicine and other supportive measures. Bypass surgery improves survival only in patients with the left main artery disease or three-vessel disease with impaired left-ventricular function. When left ventricular function is good, surgery does not usually offer better survival benefits.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine observed that the body has inherent capacity to heal itself. It has been observed that when plaque develops in the walls of coronary arteries, they can remodel themselves, say, by enlarging at the site of the obstruction.

At a time when non-invasive diagnostic procedures like chest x-rays, electrocardiography, echocardiography are available, performing routine angiography could be avoided. As the matter stands, the average patient complaining of real or imaginary ‘heart’ symptoms are given a treadmill test, followed by angiography and the advice to “deposit ` 2000,000 in the hospital office” and have angioplasty or bypass without any loss of time. The patient is injected with fear, anxiety and apprehension without giving him necessary information and time to make a well-considered decision in consultation with his physician, family and friends.

In the past three decades, Dr. Kapadia has successfully treated over 4000 patients in India and abroad, patients recommended immediate surgery, to live a normal life with medicines, exercises, yoga and the like.

Ever since he started practising cardiology in 1964, Dr. Kapadia has been seeking affordable and as far as practical, non-surgical approach to the complex problem of coronary heart disease.

Dr. Larry Dossey visited India in 1988 to deliver a lecture on “Medicine and Non-violence” at Gandhi Peace Foundation in Delhi. He visited the Gandhi Ashram at Ahmedabad and encouraged Dr. Kapadia in his mission. Dr. Dossey is a distinguished physician, author and an authority on Alternative Medicine.

In 1991, Dr. Kapadia, met Dr. Dean Ornish on June 25, 1991 at San Francisco, USA and on October 2, 1991 (Mahatma Gandhi's birthday) started Universal Healing Programme for Coronary Heart Disease at Ahmedabad.

Dr. Kapadia does not consider Universal Healing Programme only as an alternative, but also as an essential complementary component in the total management of Coronary Heart Disease.

He has written eight books on Universal Healing Programme and most of his patients use his video to guide them in practising yoga and exercises.

Dr. Kapadia has been widely felicitated for his missionary work in India and abroad. He has enlightened august audiences at prestigious conferences and seminars round the world with his lectures.

Cardiologists and cardiac surgeons will do well to digest the words of Dr. Kapadia's teacher who, while congratulating Dr. Kapadia on his obtaining his MRCP said, "Doctor, I would like you to remember that, when a patient of heart attack seeks your advice, a person who has survived the heart attack is not going to die. With that confidence in your approach, you will be able to give maximum benefit of your treatment to your patient. You are well equipped with the knowledge and you will continue to sharpen it with your experience."

When Harvard Professor Dr. Benson John met HH Dalai Lama at Dharmshala, he was given three tenants.

These three tenants of Tibetan Medicine as enunciated by HH Dalai Lama are:

1. Doctor's faith in himself that he is going to cure the patient.
2. Patient's faith in the doctor that he is going to cure him.
3. The doctor's *karma* – his skill and its application with love.

All of the 4000 plus patients, under the care of Dr. Ramesh Kapadia of Ahmedabad, are leading normal lives. They were all advised angioplasty and bypass surgery by their respective doctors, but were saved from the prohibitive expenses and discomfort by Dr. Kapadia.

A few were interviewed in depth by the author at the Ahmedabad Management Association.

All had very interesting stories to tell, but each story culminated with visible joy at leading normal lives without much-recommended and expensive surgical intervention.

The story of Shri Dinesh Panchal borders on the ridiculous.

In 1993, Dineshbhai, then 32 years old, had a minor discomfort at night. He *walked* to the nearby hospital just to make sure that there was nothing serious.

He was, to his great surprise, rushed to the ICU and was imprisoned there for four days. He was feeling absolutely normal in the ICU, except for the disturbing imagination of the hospital bill for ICU care(!).

Shifted to a special room in the hospital, he was *standing* on the balcony of his room enjoying fresh air and the hussle-bussle on the road below, when a doctor spotted him.

The doctor severely reprimanded Dineshbhai, ordered a stretcher and shifted him once again to ICU for another four days!!!

Subsequently he was advised a 'bypass'. His well-wishers assured him that money would not be a problem, but Dineshbhai chose to consult Dr. Ramesh Kapadia.

Today Dineshbhai is 52 and enjoys the view of the world – not from a balcony, but from the top of hills and mountains – Vaishnodevi, Pavagadh, Girnar, Amarnath. He regularly takes his medicines and practises yoga and relaxing techniques.

In contrast, Prof. Ashwinbhai Panchal has a long history of hospitalizations starting 1966.

Admitted for a possible cardiac dysfunction in a hospital in 1966, Prof. Panchal was discharged after a month.

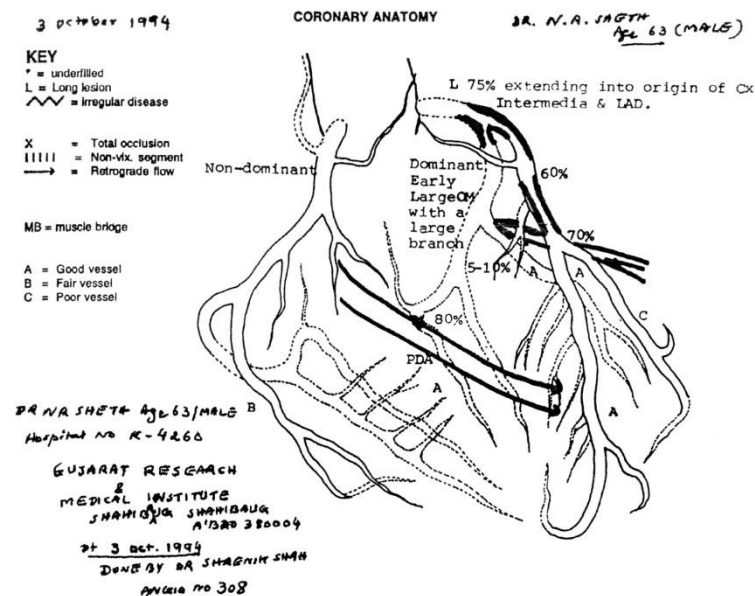
He had bouts of pain and discomfort in 1976, 1986, and 2006 when he was treated by physicians with medicines. In 2006, he was admitted in ICU and was advised angioplasty. By now he was a veteran with 40 years of fight with his own heart. He decided to wait, got in touch with Dr. Kapadia in 2008 when his symptoms returned yet one more time.

During the last five years he is symptoms free with the help of medicines, yoga, meditation and relaxation techniques.

As a columnist, I had written an article on “Medical Invoicing” – a new branch that I felt must be introduced in the medical syllabus. The doctors, I recommended, must be instructed in taking the “economic history” of the patients before invoicing them.

One of the interviewees, an officer in LIC, was given an estimate of ` 300,000 for a bypass as this was the amount he was entitled for re-imburement. The estimate was subsequently revised to ` 400,000 when the officer declared unwittingly that ‘in certain circumstances’ the reimbursement could be increased by an additional ` 100,000.

One of the many celebrity patients of Dr. Kapadia is Dr. Narayan Sheth, Ex-Director, IIM Ahmedabad. He was introduced to Dr. Kapadia in 1994 with a history of triple vessel blockage and advice for immediate bypass surgery. Now in his eighties, Dr. Sheth is having a healthy life.





Narayan Sheth (Ph.D.)

Former Director IIM Ahmedabad, India

I was introduced to Dr. Kapadia in 1994 with a history of triple vessel blockage and advice for immediate bypass surgery. I promptly earned from him a totally reassuring prognosis of active good-quality life with the UHP regime so convincingly presented in this book. I have since then led a healthy life in peace and bliss to be able to record gratitude at age 80. The rare combination of clinical wisdom and spiritual intuition incorporated by Dr. Kapadia in his unique craft of healing has enriched the lives of his large cohort of patients like me both as patients and human beings. I may add a related thought; I have exhilaratingly witnessed over the years how noble and fulfilling the practice of healing can be if it is practiced Dr. Kapadia's way.

Lifestyle changes with the help of Yoga

The conventional treatment of coronary artery disease aims at modifying the risk factors (hypertension, diabetes, and high-risk lipid profile), decreasing the frequency of angina, preventing sudden cardiac death and preserving left ventricular function. However, this approach does not take into account the assessment of the patient's inner strength. Inner strength can be determined by a person's ability to make lifestyle changes, reduce anger and hostility and cope better with stressful situations. The issue is to empower patients to make appropriate lifestyle changes. The key issue in the rising incidence of coronary heart disease appears to be imbalance in the autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic tone being much higher than the parasympathetic tone. This imbalance occurs due to job stress, family stress, financial stress, lack of social support and the loss of control of situation resulting in isolation. Smoking, alcoholism and obesity are offshoots of the sense of isolation. Cynicism, hostility and self-centredness are also the signs of isolation. This imbalance can be corrected with the regular practice of Shavasana and Meditation. Five thousand years ago, Charak, the great Indian sage and 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 been amply verified today by the experience of the Universal Healing Program. More than 10,000 patients have participated in the program so far and their feedback has validated its effectiveness. Universal Healing Program is In-depth Stress Management to Increase Spiritual Strength (ISMIS). Along with conventional management it helps to

deal with the patient as a whole - mind, body and spirit It is a holistic approach to make the patient an active participant in control, reversal and cure of his/her coronary heart disease. It believes that lifestyle changes are crucial in fighting heart disease. Hope, Faith, Love and Grace have physiological significance. Indeed, the benevolent emotions are necessary not just because they are pleasant but because they are regenerative also.

UHP heals not only coronary arteries but also the individual as a whole, hence the name Universal Healing. It is a five-point program: diet counselling, walking with a 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. All these aspects work in unison, each one supporting the others. Normally the program lasts for about 30 to 40 minutes. However, with practice, one can condense it into 10 to 15 minutes only and yet have adequate benefit. Abdominal breathing can be practiced almost anywhere and at any time. Shavasana can be practiced independently for 5 to 7 minutes. Meditation can be done either following Shavasana or independently for 3 to 5 minutes only. About seven to ten minutes of Shavasana leads to reduction in sympathetic activity for nearly four hours. Decrease in sympathetic activity brings about not only beneficial changes in heart disease, but also strengthens defence mechanisms of the body to recover from any mental or physical ailment. Shavasana is a systematic approach to relax the body and calm the mind, enabling its practitioner to experience his Soul Force (Life Force), and harness the inherent capacity of the Soul Force to bring about healing. Experience of Soul Force fosters connectedness, heals isolation and removes the fear of disease.

Conscious and sustained effort by patients to make life style changes, in addition to necessary medication and surgical treatment, provides the best and most cost-effective therapy for treatment of CAD and also helps in prevention of CAD.

For details on Universal Healing Programme:

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