

Heart Disease Outcomes Don't Benefit From Invasive Treatment

New research presented at the American Heart Association conference in Philadelphia found that common heart procedures like stents and bypasses don't have actually lower the risk of heart attack or death. Spearheaded by Dr. Judith Hochman from New York University and funded with \$100 million from the federal government, the study examined two strategies used for treating heart disease. The conservative strategy focused on medication and lifestyle changes without invasive treatments unless necessary, and the invasive strategy made use of stents or bypass surgeries. According to Dr. Hochman:

It's also important now for patients to know if they have no symptoms, if their angina is completely well controlled and they're going for a routine stress test, or for someone who's never had symptoms and gets a stress test and it's abnormal or is diagnosed with narrowing in the coronary by another test, they should know that there was no benefit to routinely doing an invasive strategy if they don't have symptoms."

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More is not More

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. There is also a huge swath of the American population managing heart disease. There are more than 35 million people in the U.S. currently prescribed statins like Lipitor and Crestor, and the majority of them will be taking those medications for the rest of their life. Many doctors also suggest other forms of disease management,

including stents and bypasses. This study is not the first to suggest those procedures should be recommended with caution, but those surgeries are likely to chest pain. Many doctors also feel the pressure to do something right away, even if continuing with medication or implementing a truly healthy lifestyle can produce the same or better results.

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Unnecessary for Whom?

More than 1.8 million stents are implanted in the U.S. every year. Some estimates say that thirty percent of those are unnecessary. For the uninsured, that procedure can cost a patient anywhere from 11,000 to 41,000 dollars, and that does not include separately billed professionals and institutions. There is a problem with heart disease in the United States, but there is no way our current system can be the answer. Managing symptoms is not the same as fixing issues.

Sources:

- *Big study casts doubt on need for many heart procedures* – AP News
- *Stents no better than drugs for many heart patients: U.S. study* – Reuters
- *Over 1.8 Million Stents Implanted per Year in the U.S.* – iDataResearch
- *Statins for high cholesterol: Are the benefits worth the risk?* – Drugs.com