



American College of Cardiology

Position Statement

Preventive Cardiology and Atherosclerotic Disease

[The following is a position statement prepared by the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease Committee: H. J. C. SWAN, MD, PHD, FACC, Chairman, JAY BROWN, MD, FACC*, MICHAEL H. DAVIDSON, MD, FACC, RAYMOND J. GIBBONS, MD, FACC, DANIEL LEVY, MD, FACC, FRITS L. MEIJLER, MD, PHD, FACC, RICHARD C. PASTERNAK, MD, FACC, THOMAS A. PEARSON, MD, FACC, RAY H. ROSENMAN, MD, FACC. This statement was approved by the Board of Trustees of the American College of Cardiology on March 12, 1994. Reprints are available from: Educational Products Sales and Marketing; 9111 Old Georgetown Road; Bethesda, MD 20814; 800/257-4740. This statement was printed in Journal of the American College of Cardiology 1994;24:838.]

*Deceased.

To fulfill its mission to foster "optimal cardiovascular disease prevention," it is appropriate and necessary that the American College of Cardiology develop a leadership role in preventive cardiology. In 1980 Dr. Robert O. Brandenburg, College President, expanded that aspect of the mission statement as follows:

The mission of the College is to ensure optimal care for persons with cardiovascular disease or the potential for developing it; and ultimately through education and socioeconomic activities to contribute significantly to the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

With increasing knowledge concerning the specific roles of the various risk factors in atherosclerotic and thrombotic diseases and vascular dysfunction, strategies aimed at the appropriate detection and modification of these risk factors now demonstrate the potential for slowing the progress of atherosclerosis and even regressing the process. Recent data suggest an important reduction in adverse clinical sequelae in certain high risk groups. The results of clinical experiences, clinical trials and published consensus reports establish that outcomes can be improved by promoting favorable life-style behaviors and by treating identified abnormalities. When interventions are appropriately targeted there is little debate that they can be both clinically effective and cost-effective. Current legislative and social initiatives favor health policies based on the concept of

"prevention." In contrast to the prevention of cardiac diseases, such as rheumatic fever and infective endocarditis, it is unlikely that such measures truly prevent† the development of atherosclerotic disease or the adverse events resulting therefrom; although a reduction in disease incidence and severity is probable, and fewer complications can be expected in many patients. Therefore, this Committee recommends that the College reaffirm and expand its policies regarding prevention of cardiovascular diseases.

The College will actively promote 1) dissemination of information relative to the prevention of atherosclerosis and its adverse consequences; 2) development of educational programs specific to the role of the cardiovascular specialist with regard to prevention; 3) cooperative development of practice guidelines, for consultative as well as rehabilitation services, to deliver cost-effective preventive care; 4) policies of fair reimbursement for effective services; and 5) participation in the assessment of clinical outcomes of such programs.

The College recommends that cardiovascular specialists also promote preventive cardiac care by 1) endorsing antismoking policies and programs; 2) encouraging healthy dietary behavior by limitation of total calorie intake, fat and cholesterol; 3) promoting prudent physical activity; 4) ensuring adequate control of arterial blood pressure; 5) managing patients with hyperlipidemia, metabolic, coagulative and other risk factors; 6) advising primary care physicians with regard to risk reduction; 7) developing a cardiovascular health promotion plan for cardiac patients and their families.

These actions of the American College of Cardiology serve to define the opportunities and responsibilities of cardiovascular specialists.

†Webster's definition of prevent: 1) (formerly) to act in anticipation; to anticipate; 2) to stop or keep from doing something; 3) to keep from happening; to make impossible by prior action; to hinder; 4) to preoccupy (the mind) (obs.).