

# Books

## ***The Cholesterol Myth. The New Healthy Heart Programme***

By Dr Robert Buist. Pp. 185. R39,99. Cape Town: Struik, 1995. ISBN 1-86825-909-9.

This reviewer received her complimentary copy of this publication from the Meat Board of South Africa. Since then it has transpired that she was just one of large numbers of medical practitioners and South African restaurant owners who received free copies. The Meat Board also brought the author of the book to South Africa for a well promoted tour of the country with extensive media exposure!

The writing style of this book is not unfamiliar to South Africans. We have seen many articles over the years in widely read layman's magazines where well-founded scientific facts are interwoven with pure speculation and emotion. These are presented with the comments of pseudo experts with an air of authority that make the speculations seem pretty convincing; these are usually offered as a panacea that will 'cure' some common malady.

The following statement — 'Meat *lowers* the harmful LDL-cholesterol as long as the fat is trimmed. So don't hold back on a good piece of lean steak or pork fillet. Foods such as eggplant, garlic, onion and soybeans will completely counteract the cholesterol-elevating effect of fatty foods if eaten at the same meal' — suggests why the Meat Board was willing to go to the expense of promoting this book.

The confusion regarding the difference between dietary and serum cholesterol will certainly be increased by this book. The author uses all the old hackneyed anti-cholesterol arguments, which were obviously written before publication of reliable studies, such as the 4S and West of Scotland studies, that proved the causal link between hypercholesterolaemia and ischaemic heart disease. He recommends that people stop smoking and use alcohol moderately. Stress management is heavily emphasised, but not the need for aerobic fitness as part of a healthy lifestyle. No mention is made of early diagnosis and effective management of hypertension, hyperlipidaemia or diabetes to prevent heart disease.

After all the irrational arguments, elements of the prudent diet are eventually recommended in the very appetising recipes at the end of the book. However, confusion is caused by identifying e.g. rice, eggplant, artichokes, chilli pepper, onions, garlic, mushrooms, ginger, grapefruit as 'key foods' to protect against heart disease. Unfortunately this book will not contribute to the prevention of ischaemic heart disease.

***Krisela Steyn***

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