

Medical nutrition therapy is effective in the management of adult dyslipidaemia - the importance of diet and lifestyle support in the prevention of CVD.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains a leading cause of death globally [1]. Major modifiable risk factors of CVD include dyslipidaemia and elevated blood pressure, which are linked to diet and lifestyle (2,3). Dietary intervention has been shown to be highly effective in preventing and managing dyslipidaemia, i.e., elevated atherogenic blood lipids, and forms the basis for dyslipidaemia treatment and CVD prevention. Multiple health authorities such as the American College of Cardiology (ACC), the American Heart Association (AHA) and the National Lipid Association (NLA) encourages the referral of patients to seek guidance from a registered dietician or nutrition expert for medical nutrition therapy (MNT) [2,3].

Nutrition therapy provided by dietitians compared with usual care improves several CVD risk factors.

Recent evidence (a meta-analysis and systematic review and a narrative review) summarised findings from randomised controlled trials on the effectiveness of MNT provided by dietitians compared with usual care in the management of adults with dyslipidaemia [2,3]. It was shown that MNT interventions provided by registered dietitians resulted in significant improvement in blood lipids (lower total and LDL-cholesterol), and lower blood pressure levels. Of note, the effect of MNT was additive to the use of lipid-lowering medications. Nutrition support provided by experts such as registered dietitians can thus help patients successfully adopt positive diet and lifestyle changes that help CVD risk factors and therefore manage the risk of developing CVD [2,3].

There is a need for offering more nutrition therapy.

MNTs can be offered in various settings, such as private practice, hospitals, and other facilities. However, as reported, the referral to nutrition care is consistently low [2]. This may be due to lack of awareness and/or access to MNT. The recent study by Sikand et al. [2] states that healthcare providers should help facilitate the access of patients to nutritional resources, as “*MNT is an evidence-based, cost-effective component of treatment to help combat the most prevalent and costly chronic conditions*” [2]. Thus, improving the access of MNT to patients can play an important role in the management of dyslipidaemia and prevention of CVD, as nutrition experts can help patients address modifiable risk factors of CVD such as elevated LDL-cholesterol and blood pressure and provide personalised guidance on how to manage them.

To learn more about motivating patients to make diet and lifestyle changes, visit the online educational tool “Diet at the heart of CVD prevention” hosted at the EAS website.

<https://www.dietattheheart.com>

References:

1. World Health Organization. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). Available at: [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cardiovascular-diseases-\(cvds\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cardiovascular-diseases-(cvds))
2. Mohr et al., 2022. Effectiveness of medical nutrition therapy in the management of adult dyslipidemia: A systematic review and meta-analysis. J Clin Lipidology 2022; 16, 547-561. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jacl.2022.06.008>
3. Sikand et al, 2023. Medical nutrition therapy provided by dietitians is effective and saves healthcare costs in the management of adults with dyslipidemia. Current Atherosclerosis Reports 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11883-023-01096-0>