THE ROLE OF DIET AND LIFESTYLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DYSLIPIDAEMIA AND PREVENTION OF CVD - A SURVEY AMONGST EAS MEMBERS ABOUT THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST

To get a better understanding of EAS members’ knowledge and interest in diet and lifestyle in the management of dyslipidaemia and the prevention of CVD a survey was initiated1 at the end of 2018. Furthermore, insights of the usefulness of currently available educational materials and the possible needs for new materials was also assessed.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The 15-minute online survey was available between 4-24 December 2018. In total, 269 EAS members from 42 countries and with an age range from 20 to 81 years participated in the survey. Of all participants, 64 (24%) were students/postdocs, 102 (38%) researchers mainly involved with CVD-related research and 103 (38%) were doctors and clinicians who directly interact with patients.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Attitudes towards the role of diet and lifestyle in dyslipidaemia and CVD prevention

- Almost all (99%) of the surveyed EAS members recognise that diet and lifestyle have a role to play in cholesterol management with 80% indicating that diet and lifestyle is either very or extremely important.
- Amongst clinicians, 75% indicate that their patients take a relatively proactive role towards cholesterol management, in the sense that they voluntarily ask for diet and lifestyle advice.

Feeling educated about the role of diet and lifestyle in CVD prevention and preferred resources to get information

- Almost all (91%) of the surveyed clinicians feel educated, to some degree, about diet and lifestyle and hence feel confident to provide expert advice to their patients and almost half (49%) of the clinicians feel either very or extremely educated.
- Almost all (97%) EAS members perceive medication, e.g. statins, as the most effective intervention for managing cholesterol. About three quarters (76%) of the clinicians also feel that adhering to medication is easy or extremely easy for their patients, whereas reducing stress levels is considered more difficult.
- The most recognised foods or food supplements in dyslipidaemia management are omega-3 fatty acids from fish (78% aware), dietary fibres (77% aware) and plant sterols/stanols (76% aware). Also, clinicians are more aware of red yeast rice and berberine than students/post docs and CVD researchers.
- Over half of the surveyed EAS members use the internet and ‘guidelines’ to learn about diet and lifestyle in relation to blood cholesterol and CVD risk management. While clinicians tend to use ‘guidelines’ more often, students tend to use the internet as a learning tool.

Advising patients about diet and lifestyle

- Reassuringly, 82% of the surveyed clinicians say that they continuously provide diet and lifestyle advice to their patients. They further state that they provide specific dietary advice to patients, mainly centred around maintaining a ‘Mediterranean diet’, encouraging patients to avoid high fat foods, and to increase intake of high fibre foods next to being more physically active. Astonishingly, smoking cessation and alcohol avoidance were mentioned less often by clinicians.
- While over 90% of clinicians recommend medication, dietary change, exercise and smoking cessation to their patients, less than half (46%) indicate that they also recommend special foods and only 4% recommend vitamin supplements.
- Considering specific foods for dyslipidaemia management, 64% of the surveyed clinicians state that they would recommend dietary fibres, 59% plant sterols/stanols and 59% would recommend omega-3 fatty acids from fish to their patients.

Awareness of current and wishes for new educational materials

- 43% of the surveyed EAS members said that they are unaware of the educational materials that the EAS offers on diet and lifestyle related topics. Nonetheless, 47% are mostly aware of the two-pager leaflet that summarises the role of diet and lifestyle in prevention of CVD as described in the ESC/EAS Guidelines for the Management of Dyslipidaemias.

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1 The survey was jointly initiated by the EAS and the joint corporate partners BASF, Raisio and Upfield and was carried out by Pegasus, Brighton, UK.
- Just under half (47%) of the surveyed EAS members regularly attend the EAS annual meetings and over half (64%) do not listen to recorded sessions from the EAS annual congresses on diet and lifestyle related topics mainly because of unawareness and lack of time.
- In view of unmet needs for educational materials on diet and lifestyle, about 60% of the surveyed clinicians feel that patient-oriented leaflets and pocket-style guidelines would be most beneficial materials, 39% of CVD researchers would like to see a website and students would prefer an app.
- Regarding future formats for educational sessions at EAS congresses, 61% of the surveyed EAS members would prefer educational seminars and about half indicated that they would also like to see workshops (57%) and ‘meet the expert’ sessions (54%) that address diet and lifestyle topics.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in the survey and so helped in providing useful insights on how existing educational materials could be better communicated and what kind of new materials should be developed in the future.

Reassuringly, EAS members highly recognise the role of diet and lifestyle in the management of dyslipidaemia and the prevention of CVD and especially amongst the younger generation since students and post docs appear to place enthusiastic emphasis on the benefit of diet and lifestyle changes. The EAS members expressed a high degree of feeling educated about the role of diet and lifestyle, particularly clinicians who reported feeling confident to talk about and advise their patients on diet and lifestyle changes. Nevertheless, no conclusions can be drawn on the quantity and quality of any given advice as this was not assessed in the current survey.

Make a link to the ‘Diet at the heart of CVD prevention’ online e-learning tool

If you want to learn more about the role of diet and lifestyle in the management of dyslipidaemias, as an important part in the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, visit the e-learning tutorial ‘Diet at the heart of CVD prevention’
http://www.dietattheheart.com/