

Doctor brings cure for heart disease to forum

By MARK BRETT
Penticton Herald

Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn Jr. is not your typical physician.

In fact, the Cleveland-based preventative cardiologist consultant would like nothing better than to have to find a new career.

But, considering the current dietary trends, that is not going to happen any time soon.

That in itself is particularly frustrating to the doctor, whose 20-year study — the longest of its kind — has proven that a low-fat, plant-based diet can prevent and even reverse some forms of heart disease.

"Basically, coronary artery disease, or heart attacks, really should never even have to occur, or, if they do occur, the disease need never progress," said Esselstyn, who received his undergraduate training at Yale University. "What needs to be done is the patients and the (medical) profession have to be brought up to speed and be aware.

"We are now going into our 20th year with patients who were told by expert cardiologists that they could get ready to go home and die, that there was nothing further the doctors could do — no more bypasses, no more angioplasty — and here they are now in their 20th year."

Members of the public will have an opportunity to hear first hand from Esselstyn how to become heart-attack proof and live longer, healthier lives at this weekend's Okanagan Health Forum in Kelowna and Penticton.

The Cleveland doctor, Cornell University professor Colin Campbell, the author of the recent book *The China Study*, along with registered dietitians Brenda Davis and Vesanto Melina, will be at the Lakeside Resort Sunday.

All four will make presentations during the program that runs from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tickets are available at Whole Foods Market or Nature's Fare.

Esselstyn's research has shown that reversal of heart disease can begin in as little as three to six weeks.

What does this apparent miracle diet involve?

"First of all, you have to eliminate all of the oils, and anything with a mother, anything that has a face," he said. "Fish, chicken, lamb beef, pork, all that stuff, and anything with dairy."

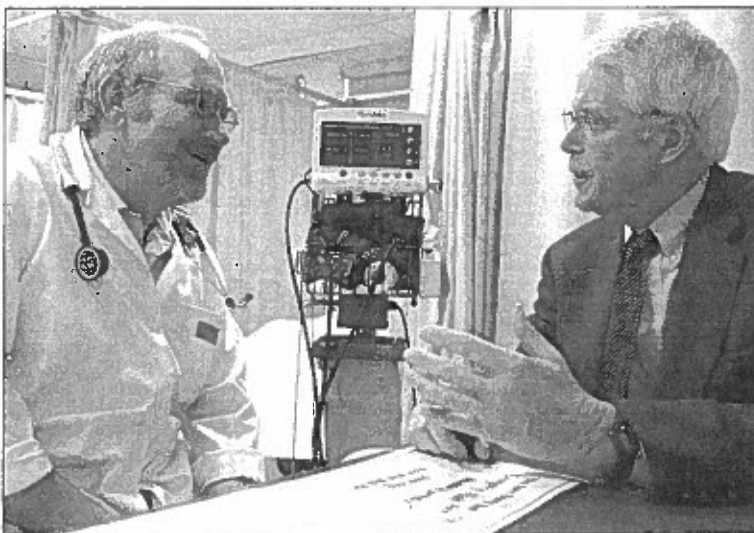
Not surprisingly, just changing people's diets to mainly fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products is often the toughest part.

"It takes awhile," said Esselstyn. "You've got to know how to make people change their behaviour. This is where repetition is the mother of skill.

"It has to be a shared vision, it has to be that we're not just going to slow the rate of progression of this disease if we're going to annihilate it, we're going to abolish it."

He likens most coronary problems to a low-grade brush fire, where traditional forms of treatment reduce, from gallons to quarts of gasoline, the fuel being added by the patient.

"So I don't allow patients to add one single thimble-full of gasoline to the fire. We have to put the fire out, and that is why we are successful."



MARK BRETT/Penticton Herald

Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn Jr., right, preventive cardiologist consultant at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, and Penticton physician Dr. Robert McIntosh talk following Tuesday's grand rounds for doctors at Penticton Regional Hospital. Esselstyn is in the Okanagan this week as part of the five-day Okanagan Health Forum.

Doctor blames fat for economic woes

By Herald Staff

If it's true that you are what you eat, then it shouldn't come as any surprise that many people are just that — fat.

And the increasing dependency on fast food as the staple of people's diets, especially the younger generation, may spell medical and financial disaster in the future.

Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn Jr. calls the decision by parents to feed their kids from the drive-thru window "a terrible tragedy" that will only come back to haunt them in the adult lives.

"Let's talk about how wonderful this diet is," said Esselstyn. "Let's talk about the American diet — not the one you are presently enjoying, but the one you are habituated to. Let's just see the gifts it is going to give you. If you have a family history of cardiovascular disease, that's the direction you are heading. If not, you'll be obese, diabetic, hypertensive, get osteoporosis and have a great tendency (if you are male) to have prostate cancer.

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"What many people don't realize is that 70 to 75 per cent of chronic illness is from the food we eat."

As a result, the money governments and companies must spend annually to cover costs associated with sickness and illness is going to continue to skyrocket.

"Why are we going broke as a nation?" asked Esselstyn. "Why is General Motors not able to fund its old-age program? Because it's spending all its money on drugs for people who are fat and sick."

He added that in the majority of cases, heart disease is not just a natural part of the aging process, but literally a self-inflicted injury.

And, even though the techniques for bypass surgery and other forms of treatments are improving, they all result in a significant reduction in the quality of life.

you know you're going to have a room full of patients, including some of the doctors."

Esselstyn admits there were a few skeptics when he first decided, out of frustration with the lack of aggressive preventative medicine, to initiate his studies on arrest and reversal treatment.

"When I started, it was with these patients who were dying and didn't think they would make it through the year," he recalled. "I had to tell them that, 'Hey, you ought to really think about doing this because it works on goats in Chicago.' So here they were, 'I'm going to leave my expert cardiologist and go and snuggle up to this general surgeon who is talking about goats in Chicago.'"

Esselstyn is not one to pull punches when it comes to his field of expertise, not only with patients, but with those in the medical profession as well.

"The best the doctors usually say is, 'My patients wouldn't do it,'" said Esselstyn, who was awarded a Bronze Star as a U.S. army surgeon in Vietnam. "I say, 'Well, what in the world is wrong with your patients, what have you done to make them immune to being compliant.'"

"And what the cardiologists usually say is 'Well, you can see that crazy guy over there who has you eat sticks and berries, but I would never be able to do it. But it's all that's left for you.' With that kind of introduction,