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HYPER-RESPONSE TO DIETARY CHOLESTEROL IN MAN

Sr,—In animals the response of serum cholesterol to dietary cholesterol is genetically determined,1 and non-responders, with only small changes in serum cholesterol after dietary cholesterol, and hyper-responders have been defined. In man response to cholesterol in the diet is very varied2 but since dietary challenge is usually done only once the reproducibility of the response is not known and the existence of human hyper-responders remains uncertain. Hyper-response to dietary cholesterol in man would be important because genetic disorders, such as familial hypercholesterolaemia and combined hyperlipidaemia, account for only a small percentage of the hypercholesterolaemia found in affluent populations.

We reinvestigated 17 men and 17 women (aged 23–78) who habitually consumed at least one egg a day and had participated in a trial in 1976. Blood sampling and serum cholesterol analysis were standardized. Serum cholesterol was measured twice on the egg-rich diet and again after 3 weeks during which the subjects ate no eggs or egg-containing products. Daily cholesterol intake on the two diets averaged 840 mg and 303 mg in 1976 and 811 mg and 245 mg in 1982. Mean serum cholesterol values fell by 0·16±0·42 mmol/l in 1976 (range −1·27 to +0·51) and by 0·31±0·35 mmol/l in 1982 (range −0·94 to +0·48). Individual responses in 1976 and 1982 were correlated (r = 0·32, p<0·05), suggesting that part of the serum cholesterol response to dietary cholesterol is indeed individually determined. This finding was confirmed in further studies. In one experiment, ninety-four healthy men and women aged 18–72 consumed 10 mg cholesterol per MJ (on average 110 mg/day) for 14 days and 55 mg MJ (610 mg/day) for another 14 days; blood was sampled twice on each diet. Almost all food was supplied by us and consumed 10 mg cholesterol per MJ (on average 110 mg/day) for 14 days. For the next 10 days they were given six egg yolks per day (1500 mg cholesterol/day) besides their usual diet. The study was repeated a year later. Although the “final” (days 9 and 10) serum cholesterol was associated with the “initial” (days 1 and 2) value (r = 0·68) suggesting that 2 days of excessive egg yolk consumption might help to identify hyper-responders, three volunteers (A, B, and E) showed responses from one year to another so different that a single 10-day experiment would give a misleading impression of sensitivity to dietary cholesterol (see table). Thus, although hyper-responders and non-responders to dietary cholesterol do exist in man, large intra-individual fluctuations in serum cholesterol5 make it difficult to establish a person’s true response.

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HAEMORRHAGIC CYSTITIS AFTER LOW-DOSE CYCLOSPHOSPHAMIDE

Sr,—Haemorrhagic cystitis is a familiar complication of large doses of intravenous cyclophosphamide. Hydration, with or without catheterisation and diuretic drugs, prevents it. Cystitis after low doses, although reported many years ago,1,2 is not well-recognised, despite its disabling and sometimes fatal consequences. This prompts us to report our experience of four cases, including one reported in 1963.3

Case 1.—A man aged 34 with Hodgkin’s disease, stage Ivb, received oral cyclophosphamide 200 mg daily for 40 days (total dose 8 g), with no adverse effects. 1 week after the drug was stopped gross haematuria developed with pain, frequency, and sterile urine. Intravenous urography demonstrated a small spastic bladder. With symptomatic treatment the pain and haematuria subsided after a month.

Case 2.—A man aged 23 with Hodgkin’s disease, stage Ivb, received intravenous cyclophosphamide 200 mg daily for 14 days