France's High Saturated Fat Intake and Low Heart Disease Rates (Responding to@DrEricBerg) Transcript

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French paradox and saturated fat claim

the french have such a low rate of heart disease yet they consume so much saturated fat and dairy cheese cream butter and meats people are just misled and they're taught that the saturated fact is something bad the u.s literally has double the heart diseases france consumes a lot more saturated fats So Eric Berg is talking about the French paradox where people in France tend to eat more saturated fat but have lower rates of coronary heart disease compared to many other countries like the United States.

Why cross-country comparisons are misleading

Then he takes that to mean that saturated-fat isn't really a problem. But there are some issues with that conclusion. For one, this sort of cross-country comparison is generally considered of low quality in part because it does not take other variables into account.

I think we can all agree that there are a number of differences between the American and French population that go beyond just their saturated fat intake.

In fact, we could use this same logic when looking at smoking rates. A far greater proportion of the French populations smokes compared to the Americans population, so we use his logic to say that smoking doesn't increase coronary heart disease risk because we see lower rates in the french population.

But I really hope he doesn' believe that. Coronary Heart disease, like many chronic diseases, is multifactorial, with a lot of variables impacting the risk.

Other explanations for the paradox

These include things like socioeconomic status, genetics, alcohol intake, smoking, diet, exercise, and so on. So making strong claims based on data that doesn't consider those variables is foolish.

And there have actually been a number of hypotheses that may explain this apparent paradox. explanation is that coronary heart disease takes decades to develop and the shift towards a higher saturated fat intake in the French population was fairly recent when this apparent paradox was first discovered.

So you may not see the impact of that saturated fact until years or even decades later. Another potential explanation Is that Coronary Heart Disease deaths may have been under reported on death certificates in France, meaning that more people actually were dying of Coronery Heart disease.

But this doesn't appear to explain the entirety of the so-called paradox.

Diet quality and source of saturated fat

another important issue is That we have to consider saturated fats source. Certain sources, like many dairy products, are healthier than other sources like meat, for example.

And let's not forget about the overall diet quality of Americans. Replacing some saturated fat-rich cheese with a doughnut isn't exactly a healthy swap.

But to his credit, he does mention diet-quality later on in the video, highlighting things like refined grains and sugar, which I would agree are probably not the best things to center your diet around.

My problem is that he then uses that to say that saturated fat isn't a problem and it's just those other things.

Evidence on saturated fat and heart disease

It's entirely possible that all of the above can be problematic in some way. And regarding saturated fats, what we need to do is look at higher versus lower intake within a population while adjusting for other variables like diet quality, alcohol intake, smoking, exercise, and so on.

When we do that, we see that Saturated fat increases the risk of coronary heart disease compared to unsaturated fats especially from plant sources quite consistently.