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## Jefferson Cardiology Association Happenings

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### **Aspirin and Prevention of Heart Attacks and Strokes**

For many years it was thought that aspirin may prevent heart attacks in men without previous heart attacks or strokes. This was based on a study in the 1980's demonstrating such benefit. There has never been strong evidence that women have such benefit from aspirin. On the other hand, it has been well recognized that both men and women with prior heart attacks and strokes benefit from aspirin.

Aspirin use to prevent heart attacks and strokes in previously healthy persons has now been challenged by the FDA, Food and Drug Administration. On the FDA website on May 7, 2014 there is a statement that in a recent FDA review of previous literature there was not sufficient evidence to support the use of aspirin to prevent a first cardiovascular event, or primary prevention. There was no question about the use of aspirin to prevent a second or subsequent cardiovascular event.

Based on this position, the FDA denied a request by Bayer allowing its aspirin product be labelled to state the product could prevent first heart attacks.

A recent study questioned that some persons may benefit from primary prevention with aspirin. This study looked at persons having CT scans to count the amount of calcium in the coronary arteries, heart arteries. In persons having no calcium counted in the arteries or a calcium score of 0, there was little chance of having a cardiovascular event within 7 years. However those who had a calcium count of 100 were at significant risk of having a cardiovascular

event and were thought to be benefitted by aspirin and statin therapy.

The coronary calcium score may be the best current means of assessing cardiac risk in persons without previous coronary problems. Locally this test is not covered by insurance but its cost has come down to \$100 and the radiation exposure is less than that associated with a mammogram.

### **Cardiovascular Complications of Marijuana**

Marijuana is now legal in Colorado and there are groups pushing for more states to legalize marijuana. All cases of serious side effects of psychoactive drugs are reported to a government agency. All reports of cardiovascular complications of marijuana between 2006 and 2010 were identified. Just under 2% of marijuana complications were cardiovascular in origin. Of these, 85% were reported in men at an average age of 34.3 years. Of the 35 reported complications, 22 represented unstable angina and 10 involved problems with arteries in the legs. Three episodes involved brain arteries. There were 9 deaths among the 35 persons with complications.

This report indicates that marijuana is not harmless and may lead to a small number of cardiovascular complications. These complications may be small in number but may have serious complications including mortality in young people.

### **Benefit of Maintaining Normal Rhythm**

In the past there has been research demonstrating that persons with atrial fibrillation may have similar long term outcomes if atrial fibrillation is accepted

compared to restoring normal rhythm. Now there is information that patients with weakened heart muscle may do better with maintenance of normal rhythm.

In a study of patients with reduced ejection fraction, a measure of pumping capability, there was improvement in ejection fraction over time in those maintaining normal rhythm after ablation treatment to restore normal rhythm.

Ablation may burn out or freeze electrical pathways leading to atrial fibrillation. In patients studied the ejection fraction was under 40%, normal is 60% or above, and those treated with ablation improved to a mean ejection fraction of 53%. There was no evaluation what changes were noted regarding reduced cardiac events or survival.

### Happy Memorial Day To All!

#### **Cherry Bomb Chicken:**

##### **INGREDIENTS:**

1 quart cold water  
1/3 cup kosher salt  
1/2 cup white sugar

1 (4 pound) whole chicken, cut into 4 pieces

1 pint cherry tomatoes  
3 habanero peppers, seeded  
4 cloves garlic

1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme

1/4 teaspoon ground cumin

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

2 tablespoons prepared Thai sweet chili sauce

##### **DIRECTIONS:**

1. Combine water, kosher salt, and sugar in a saucepan over low heat; cook until sugar and salt dissolve, 4 to 5 minutes. Set aside to cool to room temperature.
2. Score the skin side of each piece of chicken 2 to 3 times, about 1/8 inch deep. Place chicken pieces in a large bowl or lidded container.
3. Puree cherry tomatoes, habanero peppers, garlic, and allspice with the salt and sugar mixture in a blender until smooth.
4. Pour tomato brine over chicken pieces, making sure all pieces are covered. Refrigerate 4 to 6 hours.
5. Remove chicken pieces and transfer to a plate or baking sheet lined with paper towels. Pat chicken pieces dry with more paper towels.
6. Preheat an outdoor grill for high heat and lightly oil the grate.
7. Combine thyme, cumin, black pepper, cayenne pepper, and oil in a small bowl.
8. Brush each chicken piece with thyme and oil mixture.
9. Cook chicken, skin side down, on the preheated grill for 1 to 2 minutes. Turn each piece and move to indirect heat. Cook until well-browned and meat is no longer pink in the center, 30 to 35 minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted near the bone should read 165 degrees F (74 degrees C).
10. Brush each piece with Thai sweet chile sauce. Transfer to a plate and allow chicken to rest for 10 minutes before serving.

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