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# Heart Chelation: A Scam

## What is Chelation Therapy?

Chelation Therapy is an accepted treatment for poisoning by many metals (like lead, cadmium, arsenic, zinc, etc) and other toxic substances. These chelating agents "cleanse" the blood of these poisons. Some unscrupulous healthcare providers, however, are bilking the unsuspecting public of their hard-earned money by prescribing and giving chelation intravenous shots "to unclog heart arteries," a claim that is false and without medical basis.

## Which drugs are used as chelating agents?

Calcium disodium edetate, Dimercaprol, and Penillamine are some of them.

## Is this the "therapy" advertised to unclog arteries?

Yes, there are unscrupulous individuals in the United States, Europe, Asia, and other parts of the globe (including the cities of Manila and Cebu), who dupe and victimize the innocent public with claims that intravenous injections of supposedly these drugs, which they call chelation therapy, can unclog arteries in the body to prevent a heart attack and stroke. These "practitioners," who advertise that Chelation Therapy can dissolve hardening of the arteries and therefore preclude the need for angioplasty or open heart surgery, charge exorbitant fees for the "treatment". In the United States, charges range from 4 to 6 thousand US dollars for "the complete session."

## How is chelation treatment given?

The patients are given a series of intravenous injections for so many days. What drug is actually injected, or whether only plain saline or dextrose are administered instead of true chelating agents, no one knows. In the United States, this practice of using chelation therapy to dissolve hardening of the arteries is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and condemned by the medical community. There is no legitimate scientific proof or basis for the claim. Some physicians and doctors of osteopathy have lost their medical license for perpetrating this fraud.

## How did this practice come about?

It is easy to surmise that since chelating agents are really effective in the

treatment of poisoning with metals and other toxic substances, and "cleanse" the blood among these patients, some enterprising people conveniently "extended" the use of these agents to include unclogging blocked arteries. Since all adults develop hardening of the arteries, to one degree or another, sooner or later in life, and since heart attack and stroke are commonplace, financial greed and deception have overcome some of these "practitioners" (who may not even be licensed physicians) to go into this very lucrative business.

## **Why does the FDA not ban these chelating agents?**

Chelating agents are legitimate and good drugs indicated for specific conditions: metal poisoning and toxicity from other substances. There is nothing wrong with these drugs. The issue here is that these chelating agents are being used for a condition for which they are not indicated or effective. They are useless as far as dissolving hardening of the arteries, or unclogging arteries are concerned.

## **Is there any drug that can dissolve hardening of the arteries?**

No. There is no known safe drug that can dissolve hardening of the arteries or unclog blocked arteries. The blockages in the arteries are so hard and usually calcified like teeth or bone that to date, medical science has not discovered any medication that can dissolve hardening of the arteries. In the recent meeting of the American College of Cardiology, another study confirmed that chelation therapy for coronary artery disease is baseless, useless and ineffective.

## **How about the enzymes injected to treat acute heart attack?**

These enzymes (streptokinase, urokinase, TPA, etc.), which cardiologists administer intravenously in the emergency room or ICU when the patient is diagnosed to have an acute heart attack that is 4 to 6 hours old, are substances that dissolve the solid but still soft blood clot that blocks the coronary artery causing the heart attack. These enzymes cannot dissolve arteriosclerotic plaque or hardening of the arteries.

## **How do these "doctors" get away defrauding the public?**

Firstly, we do not know if only harmless saline or innocuous dextrose is the "drug" that is administered, in order not to have the possible side-effects of true chelating agents. Secondly, public ignorance makes a consumer an easy prey to these fraudulent practices, the reason we have decided to write about it to educate and forewarn the public about this scam. Thirdly, both the lay community and the medical community have not organized themselves to expose and fight these money-hungry charlatans, and bring them to justice.

## **How are patients adversely affected by this scam?**

**Not only do unsuspecting patients lose their hard-earned money for a treatment that has been proven by medical science as ineffective, but they are also deceived and given false hopes, which delay the proper diagnosis and treatment of their heart illness. Needless to say, this unwarranted delay could lead to worsening of the disease and a higher morbidity and mortality rate. We have heard and read of cases where patients have died as a result of reliance on this unconventional therapy and the delay in getting the proper treatment.**

## **So, what's the best thing to do?**

**In this day and age of modern and sophisticated medical technological advances, it is only prudent for all of us to safeguard our health by doing preventive measures and taking advantage of the scientifically proven and accepted convention of medical treatment. When needed, there is no substitute for a thallium stress test and heart catheterization in the diagnosis of coronary heart disease among medically screened individuals. For therapy, appropriately chosen medications, and/or angioplasty, or coronary bypass surgery are the proven effective management for coronary artery disease in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. The easier or quicker treatment is always more appealing, but consumers beware of these advertisements! If they sound too good to be true, chances are they are not true. Do not gamble your life away.**

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