

Targeting heart disease; Mac-developed tool helps to better determine patient's exact risks

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Did you know your skin can help determine your risk of coronary artery disease, the most common form of heart disease?

Testing skin sterol levels, or skin-tissue cholesterol levels found in a person's skin, is one of the newer methods that, in combination with the traditional forms, can help a physician better determine a patient's exact risk for coronary artery disease.

That's the finding of a new study presented yesterday at the annual Canadian Cardiovascular Congress in Montreal by Dr. Milan Gupta, assistant clinical professor at Mac and cardiologist at the William Osler Health Centre in Brampton.

When used in combination with tools that measure C-reactive protein (a protein found in the blood), it can help identify increased risk of coronary artery disease in patients who have no signs or symptoms of heart disease.

"This study shows us that if an at-risk patient tests high on skin sterol and C-reactive protein, they are likely at greater risk of ... coronary artery disease," said Gupta.

Fifty-four per cent of all cardiovascular deaths are due to coronary artery disease. Every year, more than seven million people worldwide die from the disease.

After further study, Gupta added, "we may learn that these patients warrant more aggressive treatment."

Skin sterol is non-invasively measured with PREVU* Point of Care (POC) Skin Sterol Test. "PREVU* POC can give physicians a clearer picture about whether the patient is at low, moderate or elevated risk," Gupta said.

PREVU* POC was developed by PreMD Inc. (formerly IMI International Medical Innovations, Inc.), whose research and product development facility is at McMaster.