HEART HEALTH

New Treatments For Coronary Artery Disease

(NAPSA)—New research indicates there are a growing number of ways the seven million Americans with coronary artery disease (CAD) can manage their condition.

Medical professionals believe that many of the heart attacks that kill more than 500,000 Americans every year can be controlled or possibly prevented by changes in behavior, diet or with appropriate medical therapy or a combination.

Risk factors for CAD include high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, smoking, obesity and physical inactivity. Consensus is that people with CAD can benefit from modifying their diet to one that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and adding exercise.

Recent research has shown that even moderate amounts of physical activity can reduce death rates from CAD. Medications—such as beta blockers and calcium channel blockers—have also proven to be beneficial.

A new therapy is on the horizon. Gene therapy introduces DNA into the patient's own cells which apparently stimulates the production of a natural protein that seems to initiate formation of new blood vessels. These new vessels may nourish the oxygen deprived heart muscle.

Dr. Douglas W. Losordo, an interventional cardiologist and thought leader in the area of gene therapy for the treatment of heart disease at Caritas St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Boston is evaluating gene therapy as a viable option for CAD patients. His studies, which will ultimately include more patients, are testing a gene-therapy formulation called Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor 2 (VEGF-2) being developed by Corautus Genetics Inc.

Recent research shows that even moderate physical activity contributes to a healthier heart.

VEGF-2 is a vascular growth factor gene believed to stimulate the growth and migration of cells essential to the development of new blood vessels. VEGF-2 therapy proposes to treat severe coronary artery disease through direct injection into oxygen deficient cardiac muscle to increase blood flow back to the heart.

"The therapy requires further testing, but we are encouraged that we may eventually be able to help many severely ill patients," says Dr. Losordo.

Recently, Boston Scientific Corp. made a significant investment in Corautus Genetics Inc. as part of a collaboration to develop and commercialize the therapeutic application of VEGF-2. Boston Scientific has obtained exclusive rights to distribute Corautus' VEGF-2 gene products once regulatory approval is obtained.