



Beverlee Warren, MA, MS

Outliving Heart Disease
by Richard A. Stein, MD

New York: Newmarket Press, 2006. 286 pp., \$24.95.

Beyond Cholesterol
by Julius Torelli, MD

New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005. 210 pp., \$13.95.

Advocates of preventive cardiology continue to publish new information for consumers to support the value of early detection of heart disease and help consumers obtain the best medical and lifestyle treatments. These two books should be added to every consumer health collection. If time constraints keep you from thoroughly answering your patients' questions about new tests and treatments, including what works and what doesn't, and how they can outlive heart disease, these two resources will be a useful supplement and reinforcement. They will also empower your patients to take responsibility for their heart health. Recommend both books to patients who read on at least a high school reading level (Flesch-Kincaid grade level 12). Both books include a glossary, index, and a section on additional resources.

A recent article on the value of information resources for secondary prevention of heart disease states what nurse educators and consumer health librarians observe daily: "Providing supplementary written information increases patients' knowledge of disease and reduces distress and decisional conflict because it reinforces verbal instructions and serves as a home resource" (1). These tools will inform your patients and gain their active participation in achieving your mutual heart health goals.

Living well with your heart until you die of something else is the premise of *Outliving Heart Disease*. In the past decade the rules have changed. This book provides valuable information on the "new rules" based on "new science" resulting from the latest research findings. Dr. Stein even addresses what helps and what doesn't in the complex world of alternative and complementary medicines. Now, for the new rules:

"Know if you have heart disease, or, more critically, whether you are having a heart attack." Two separate charts in this chapter point out symptoms of imminent heart attack in men and women.

"Identify your risk factors—old and new—for developing heart disease." In addition to the usual cholesterol, blood pres-

sure, smoking, diet, diabetes, and sedentary lifestyle factors, this chapter includes sections on metabolic syndrome, depression, C-reactive protein, homocysteine, and lipoprotein(a) and the impact these components have on overall risk assessment. Readers can calculate their 10-year risk percentage using the Framingham point scores and develop a plan based on whether they are in the low-, intermediate-, or high-risk category.

"Include statins: learn about these and similar wonder drugs and why they prevent coronary events." This section includes a simplified explanation of how statins work to reduce coronary events.

"Establish and maintain an exercise program: know why exercise is so important." Dr. Stein's goal is an exercise program that the patient will stay with and one that is based on the rate of perceived exertion. This chapter also lists tips to reduce the risk of injury or of precipitating a cardiovascular event.

"Select and stick to the best diet for your heart." Among other helpful instructions, Dr. Stein explains and strongly recommends a modified DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet.

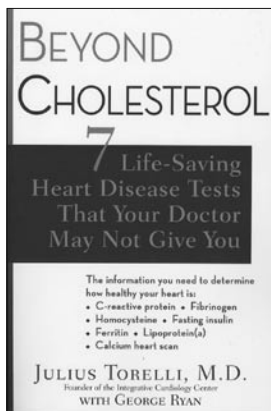
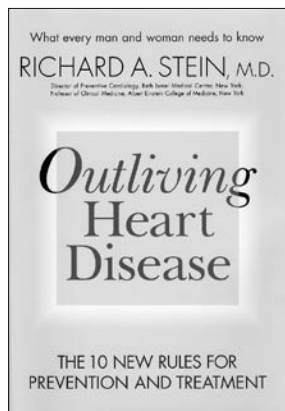
"Reduce stress, anxiety, anger, and depression." An essential rule in outliving heart disease is recognizing the mind-body connection and modifying behaviors accordingly. The research Dr. Stein references provides compelling new evidence for how our thoughts and

feelings affect our cardiovascular health.

"Explore alternative and complementary medical treatment." Rational recommendations are explored based on the best available evidence concerning the safety and efficacy of specific herbal supplements, nutraceuticals, and vitamins. The value of alternative treatments, including meditation, prayer, homeopathy, and chelation therapy, for heart disease is discussed along with informed warnings to avoid potentially harmful therapy options.

"Keep up with the latest diagnostic, medical, pharmaceutical, and surgical therapies in treating heart disease." This chapter includes a helpful list of indicators for those considering the value versus the risk of invasive procedures. Dr. Stein presents evidence for the value of blood tests in addition to the typical lipid panel and reviews the latest noninvasive heart tests as possible alternatives to coronary angiography.

"Understand how your heritage may alter your heart disease risk: a special word for African Americans, Hispanics, and others." Recognizing that up until 10 years ago most studies on treatment for heart disease were performed on Caucasian men, Dr. Stein explores the latest research findings on risk factors,



cardiac testing, treatment, and symptoms unique to other ethnic groups and women.

“Partner with your doctor to establish and reach your health goals by working together for a winning program: determine together strategies for risk reduction and outliving heart disease.” This chapter addresses the critical consumer health question, “How do I get the best care?” In support of the purpose of this book, Dr. Stein answers with, “You are going to get the best care from your doctor only if you know what best care entails, and if you monitor it” (p. 233). Health care providers who believe his statement will recommend appropriate information resources, like the 2 books reviewed here, to their patients. As Dr. Stein stresses, “Being informed and assertive is critical to getting best care” (p. 251).

A companion website has been created for this book at <http://www.outlivingheartdisease.com/> with a link to an author interview. At the time of this writing, the interview was listed as “coming soon.” This promises to be an informative supplement to the book given Dr. Stein’s contribution to the field of preventive cardiology. He established the Cardiac Prevention and Rehabilitation Program at the 92nd Street Y in New York City and currently serves as the director of preventive cardiology at Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, and as one of the senior editors of *Preventive Cardiology*.

Beyond Cholesterol’s subtitle, *7 Life-Saving Heart Disease Tests That Your Doctor May Not Give You*, explains the structure of the book. As Dr. Torelli cautions, “Cholesterol tests provide valuable information, but they don’t tell the whole story. In fact, they leave out some really important aspects. Acting as if this one piece of information presents the whole story can put your health at risk” (p. xii). *Beyond Cholesterol* covers most of the same testing information as *Outliving Heart Disease* but is more focused on the essential new tests. A chapter is dedicated to each

of the tests: C-reactive protein, fibrinogen, homocysteine, fasting insulin, ferritin, lipoprotein(a), and calcium heart scan.

Each test chapter begins with an important synopsis in chart form answering the following questions: What is it? What do the test results mean? What is the cost without medical insurance? What increases the level of the marker being tested? What lowers the level of the marker being tested? The charts provide quick reference information and in themselves are worth the price of the book. The brief case studies sprinkled throughout the book add human interest. These scenarios help readers identify with a real patient’s condition and appreciate that medicine is as much an art as a science. Frequently, a patient’s presenting profile does not warrant alarm until the information from a combination of tests is considered.

Patients who have this book will have the necessary information to appreciate the complexity of preventing heart disease and will likely realize the necessity of professional medical assistance to manage their health. Like Dr. Stein, Dr. Torelli is a proponent of the DASH diet and includes lifestyle recommendations in the final chapter. As founder of the Integrative Cardiology Center in High Point, North Carolina, Dr. Torelli advocates the use of technology and research in conjunction with lifestyle change and emotional well-being as the path to health. Recommend this book to patients who are interested in knowing more about the tests you order or may want to order in the future for their care.

The reviewer, Beverlee Warren, MA, MS, is manager and senior medical librarian of the Baylor Heart and Vascular Institute at Baylor University Medical Center.

-
1. Redfern J, Ellis E, Briffa T, Freedman SB. Development and testing of innovative patient resources to improve delivery of care for the management of coronary heart disease (CHD): a descriptive study. *BMC Health Serv Res* 2006;6(1):95 [Epub ahead of print].