

Do We Really Need Treatment

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Mark Twain once said that there were "lies, damn lies and statistics" and he could well have been talking about the state we are now in when it comes to preventative treatment.

The health profession and the pharmaceutical companies love to throw figures around to support their push for us to take more and more expensive pills and potions just to stay healthy but are they really dazzling us with science or baffling us with horse hockey?

For example, we men are told that high cholesterol levels are dangerous and we should take drugs called statins to lower our cholesterol levels and so reduce the risk of heart attack. In fact, we're told, if we take those drugs the risk of heart attacks will be reduced by a whopping 31 percent.

So of course we're going to rush out and buy and consume those drugs because we don't want to have a heart attack. But what does that 31 percent really mean?

An interesting article - [Treat Me?](#) - published online on the Slate site - puts a different slant on these figures.

The article takes another look at the figures arrived at in the original study that produced the 31 percent figure I mentioned a moment ago.

"There's another instructive way to consider the numbers. Suppose that 100 people with high cholesterol levels took statins. Of them, 93 wouldn't have had heart attacks anyway. Five people have heart attacks despite taking Pravachol. Only the remaining two out of the original 100 avoided a heart attack by taking the daily pills. In the end, 100 people needed to be treated to avoid two heart attacks during the study period—so, the number of people who must get the treatment for a single person to benefit is 50. This is known as the "number needed to treat." "

And drug companies don't want people to know about that "number needed to treat" because if they do then they're going to stop making those obscene profits that they make each year.

Be sure to read the whole article at the link provided. It makes for very interesting reading.