

Preview - Nina Teicholz- The Fear Of Saturated Fat and Cholesterol

Dr. Eenfeldt: Our authorities are often very convincingly telling people that it's definitely bad for you to eat butter.

Nina Teicholz: Well, it's an idea that's been entrenched for half a century, so it's very hard to back out of advice once you enter into it. But it really began in 1961 with the very first dietary recommendations to not eat saturated fat or from the American Heart Association and they were based on one study that was done by a researcher named Ancel Keys, pathologist at the University of Minnesota and he had this idea that saturated fat causes heart disease.

He did this study called, "The seven country study", it's like the Big Bang of nutrition studies. All nutrition science points back to this one study. And there were a number of methodological problems with this study, I'll just tell you a couple of them. One is, you can say that he cherry-picked his countries. He chose countries that he knew would prove his hypothesis and he avoided those that he knew would not, like Germany, France, where they eat a lot of saturated fat, have very low rates of heart disease.

Dr. Eenfeldt: They were not in the study.

Nina Teicholz: Were not in the study. And he also had tremendous difficulties in measuring diet. Of the 13,000 men that he studied, only looked at the diet of 500 of them, less than 500, and he did things like... when he went to Crete, where he had his kind of star subjects on the island of Crete, one of the subject periods when he went and looked at them was during Lent. When they were all avoiding butter, meat, cheese, dairy and eggs.

So that's just a little emblematic example of what bad research that was. But nevertheless, that study was like the acorn that grew into the giant oak tree of the official advice that we have today. And was all basically cherry-picked statistics that couldn't really prove anything about what diet was healthy or not.

No, the official policy began before the science was ready and there was science does afterwards, there were a number of large clinical trials that tried to prove this idea that had already become policy... Those large trials, some of the biggest nutrition studies ever done in hospitals, close settings, highly controlled conditions...

They had diets high in saturated fats, where they took all the saturated fats and had like soy-filled milk, soy-filled cheese, soy-filled hamburgers... They did not show that people on the soy lived any longer than the people on the regular foods. And the people on the soy diets and corn oil as well, ended up dying in much higher rates of cancer. So it was really--

Dr. Eenfeldt: So once they tested it, it didn't work.

Nina Teicholz: It didn't work, the evidence was never there, but at that point it already became official policy and it was too hard to back out of...