



AHA and the hidden corporate war against Coconut oil

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The American Heart Association (AHA) recently released a controversial Presidential Advisory on Dietary fats, demonizing the use of coconut oil as a cooking fat. The advisory guided the American population to replace saturated fats including coconut oil and replace them with vegetable oils containing polyunsaturated fats as a recipe to reduce the risk of cardio vascular diseases by 30 per cent. According to the advisory, coconut oil has been found to raise LDL cholesterol, which in turn will increase the risk of cardio vascular diseases. Frank M Sacks of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health is the lead author of the report. Frank Sacks is also a key figure associated with Menus of Change, an organization sponsored by 48 Food Product Corporations. Major sponsors of Menus of Change include Unilever brands and Northern Canola Organization. Unilever has vested interests in promoting highly processed vegetable oils including soybean oil. Unilever owns major vegetable oil brands. Northern Canola Organization is an agency engaged in encouraging the cultivation of genetically modified canola and canola oil. The authors, who prepared the recent Presidential Advisory on Dietary fats, vilifying coconut oil have potential private funded conflict of interests. The major sponsors of AHA are the corporate promoters of genetically modified canola and soybean. Rather than reducing the risk of cardio vascular diseases among American population, the real motive behind the Presidential Advisory is the protection of the vested interests of American Trans National Corporations.

Apart from the potential conflict of interests, the directive against coconut oil itself is aligned with outdated, obsolete research studies. The guidelines are not based on any new scientific information or research studies. It is based on decade old, faulty studies. AHA is in the habit of declaring certain dietary components as unhealthy in one fine morning and withdrawing the warning and ban after the lapse of certain period of time. However the Association has been continuously engaged in a war against coconut oil for the last 50 years. New advisory is only a continuation of this undeclared war against coconut oil.

There is no systematic and conclusive evidence linking the dietary use of coconut oil and the increased risk of cardio vascular diseases. In fact, many research studies have been published in recent times highlighting the health benefits of using coconut oil as a dietary fat. However, authors of the AHA report have cherry picked four research studies to support the risk of using coconut oil in diets. These outdated research studies were published in the 1960s and 70s. AHA authors have repeated the results of these studies once again in their new Presidential Advisory on Dietary Fats. These studies were conducted using out dated and faulty research methodologies. AHA has been using the findings of these studies again and again with vengeance against coconut oil at regular intervals. Multiple other meta- analysis had found weak evidence or no evidence to link the dietary use of coconut oil and increased risk of Cardio Vascular Diseases.

Between 1980 and 2017, the AHA released eight Presidential Advisories on dietary fats. There are at least 17 systematic reviews and meta-analyses conducted in recent years that found no relationship between saturated fat consumption and cardiovascular diseases. Authors of the AHA report, however conveniently hand picked four old studies. None of these four studies were conducted on the basis of elaborate and systematic clinical studies. In the introduction of the recent AHA presidential advisory on Dietary Fats, the authors noted that in the past few years, meta-analyses of observational studies and randomized clinical trials have come to discordant conclusions about the relationship between dietary saturated fat and risk of CVD. Ignoring this, the AHA authors selected only four core studies published in 1969, 1970, 1968 and 1979 which were not based on large scale scientific and reliable clinical trials.

The controversy linking saturated fats and CVD started in 1954 when David Kritchevsky published a research paper. Kritchevsky fed vegetarian rabbits with processed cholesterol and reported that the cholesterol clogged the arteries of rabbits and led to CVD.

Soybean oil industry made use of the study in their favour. In 1957, Ancel Keys came forward with the hypothesis that saturated fats raise serum cholesterol which in turn increases the risk of heart disease. This hypothesis is popularly known as the saturated fat-cholesterol-heart disease hypothesis. Even though the most often studied saturated fats are animal fats, coconut oil is often included in the hypothesis because it is also a saturated fat. The Ancel Keys's hypothesis linking saturated fats and heart disease found a place in the first presidential advisory on dietary fats published in 1980.

Ancel Keys conducted both human feeding and observational studies. His research was faulty, on many accounts. In human studies Keys used hydrogenated coconut oil. In his observational studies, coconut oil was only a minor component. Sources of saturated fats that Keys used in his studies were butter fat, margarine and hydrogenated coconut oil known as hydrol. The use of hydrol and margarine casts doubts about the validity of Ancel Keys's studies. The increase of serum cholesterol might have been due to the trans fats in margarine and hydrogenated coconut oil making his conclusions invalid. Ancel Keys used hydrogenated coconut oil to

make his biased judgment against pure coconut oil. More over, Keys was never able to unambiguously prove this hypothesis linking saturated fats and cardiovascular diseases. Frank Sacks and co-authors of the 2017 presidential advisory on dietary fats rely upon the decades old same hypothesis of Ancel Keys to vilify coconut oil. They advise the world to replace coconut oil and use corn oil, soybean oil, canola oil and extra virgin olive oil as cooking fats.

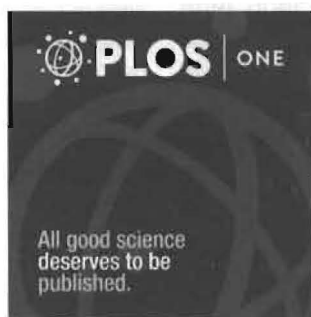
The AHA founded in 1924 claims that it is a non-profit organization. However, the working fund for the functioning of the Association is provided by major American Multinational Companies including Unilever, Monsanto, BASF, Bayer and Procter and Gamble.

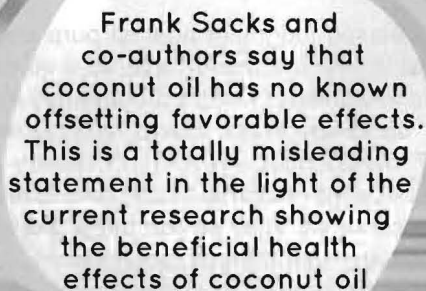
Many of the recommendations of AHA are influenced by the vested interests of these transnational corporations. Without conclusive scientific evidences, the association has been engaged in a continuous hidden war against coconut oil. Compared to coconut oil, more number of research studies were published in the recent past regarding the unhealthy effects of polyunsaturated fats contained in vegetable oils like canola oil, soybean oil and corn oil. But the American Heart

Association ignored these research findings against vegetable oils, especially soybean oil.

A research article published in PLOS one journal in 2015 revealed that increased consumption of soybean oil which is rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) has been a major causal factor for the obesity epidemic in the US. The recommendation for decreased saturated fat consumption as per guide lines issued by American Heart Association led to a 1000 per cent increase in the consumption of soybean oil in the US from 0.01 to 11.6 kg per year per capita between 1909 and 1999. In rat feeding experiments, soybean oil induced diabetes, glucose intolerance and insulin resistance. Soybean oil also caused fatty liver, hepatocyte ballooning and accumulation of fatty acid metabolites in liver. The authors concluded that in mice, a diet high in soybean oil is more detrimental to metabolic health than a diet high in fructose or coconut oil.

Globally half of the vegetable oil production is from soybean. In US, 90 percent of the vegetable oil production is from soybean. Multinational companies engaged in food processing and marketing of seeds and weedicides spend millions of dollars annually for the promotion of genetically modified soybean





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cultivation and consumption of soybean oil. The hatchet job on coconut oil is part of a long term misinformation campaign spear headed by the AHA with the multinational companies behind them. The real objective behind this misinformation strategy is to tarnish the image of any cooking oil that is perceived to give even a slightest challenge to soybean oil. Frank Sacks, lead author of the report, repeatedly stated that he has no idea why people think coconut oil is healthy. In the Presidential Advisory on dietary fats, Frank Sacks and co-authors say that coconut oil has no known offsetting favorable effects. This is a totally misleading statement in the light of the current research showing the beneficial health effects of coconut oil. AHA, which functions like a terrorist group against coconut oil is only a front organization of the big industry.

94 percent of soybean cultivated in the US is the genetically modified roundup ready soya bean of Monsanto Corporation. Round up ready soybean is genetically modified to exhibit resistance to the glyphosate based weedicide popularly known as round up. The genetically modified soybean will withstand the sprayings of round up weedicide, whereas all the weeds will be destroyed. The international agency for research on cancer under the WHO has evaluated glyphosate as a possible carcinogenic agent. The roundup ready soya bean was introduced for commercial cultivation in the US in the mid 1990s. The area under roundup ready soybean in the US in 1997 was 17 percent of area under soybean cultivation. This was increased to 94 percent in 2014.

In the last 20 years 'super weeds' exhibiting resistance to round up weedicide had emerged in many parts of US. As a solution to this, the Syngenta and BASF companies have introduced a more harmful weedicide Diacamba in 2017. Monsanto

is planning to introduce new toxic combinations of weedicides with glyphosate and other commercial weedicides in the market. The vegetable oil and food processing industry in the US. is totally dependent upon the commercial cultivation of genetically modified soybean. It is the need of these multinational companies promoting genetically modified soybean to maintain the current market share of soybean oil at any cost, By continuously attacking coconut oil at regular intervals, the AHA which bears the mask of a nonprofit, independent organization is trying to satisfy the hidden agenda of the American multinational companies engaged in seed, weedicide and soybean based food processing business.

Two representatives of American Canola Association are also members in the nutritional advisory panel of AHA. Almost all canola crops grown in US. are genetically modified to be resistant to herbicides especially glyphosate. Canola consumption has been linked to Vitamin E deficiency, and a shortened life span in animal studies. Modern canola plants have been bred to have lower levels of toxic erucic acid, which is naturally occurring, in all natural forms of rapeseed and mustard. Canola cultivated for food use typically contains erucic acid below 0.5 %. However, animal feeding studies revealed that the ingesting oils containing erucic acid over a period of time can lead to a heart condition called myocardial lipidosis, a temporary and reversible disorder.

Because of the faulty nutritional policies of AHA, the cholesterol content in American diet decreased to 34 percent from 45 percent between 1971 and 2011 and that of fructose, sugar and carbohydrates increased to 51 percent from 39 percent during the same period. Even though the incidents of obesity, heart diseases and diabetes increased considerably, the AHA never bothered to look in to scientific

evidences to revise their nutritional guidelines and recommendations.

Because of general prejudice and bias against coconut oil propagated by agencies like AHA, the potential benefits of coconut oil is kept buried in medical journals. It has the potential to protect against a wide variety of chronic health problems. Coconut oil is rich in medium chain fatty acids (lauric acid.) They do not participate in the bio synthesis and transport of cholesterol. MCFAs are directly absorbed from the intestine and sent straight to the liver to be rapidly used for energy production. This in fact is a cardio protective attribute of coconut oil. Coconut oil has been a primary source of dietary fat for thousands of years in Sri Lanka, Samoa and other Pacific Islands and some of the South East Asian Countries. Some of these countries have lowest heart disease rates in the world. Compared to Sri Lanka, the United States of America where people relied more or on polyunsaturated fats from soybean, canola and corn oils, deaths due to heart diseases are at least 280 times higher.

Compared to unsaturated fatty Acids, more studies have been conducted on the unhealthy effects of polyunsaturated fatty acids. Soya bean oil is rich in omega -6 fatty acids, which is needed by the human body. However, American people are getting omega-6 fatty acids up to 20 times more than required through processed food items, Some research studies have revealed that over abundance of Omega-6 fatty acids increases the risk of inflammation, Cardio Vascular diseases, Cancer and auto immune diseases. The AHA never bothered to issue dietary guidelines about the over abundance of soya bean oil in American diet and its adverse effects on human health.

AHA has been implementing a programme named Heart Check Programme, for labeling and certifying certain products as safe for heart. The Association is issuing these certificates to highly processed food products of fast food chains which contain high content of soybean oil, fructose and other artificial chemical components. Certificates are issued purely on monitory consideration without scientifically evaluating the health effects of ingredients incorporated in such food products. Corporate companies which are able to pay heavy fee are the beneficiaries of the Heart Check Programme of AHA. When it comes to coconut oil, AHA always follows a dubious standard. The funding sources of AHA also includes big pharmaceutical companies like Amarin, Amgen, Astra Zeneca, Eli Lilly , Glaxo Smith Kline, Merck and Pfizer. There are allegations that the AHA has been formulating many recommendations for helping these big pharma companies for enhancing the sale of statin drugs for reducing bad cholesterol.

Over the years, the AHA has been following a three pronged strategy for promoting the vested interests of the American multinational companies. Their first strategy is the periodic releasing of dietary guidelines advising the consumers to replace coconut oil with polyunsaturated fatty acid rich vegetable oils like soybean oil and canola oil. The other strategies are the propaganda for wide use of statin drugs for reducing cholesterol and the advisory for the consumption of food product checked and certified by AHA as safe to heart and human health. In a recent survey it was found that 72 percent of the American population considered coconut oil as a healthy food. However only 32 percent of the nutrition experts supported this view point.

It is estimated that the market for coconut milk will register an annual growth rate of 15.4 percent by 2020. Demand for Virgin Coconut oil and other coconut food products are also increasing in the international market. This growing demand for coconut food products may become a cause of worry for the soybean , corn and canola based food industries. Representatives of the companies like Nestle, Coca-Cola, The Sugar Association, the United Soybean Board and US Canola association serve in the industry Nutrition panel of AHA. These corporate leaders might be able to influence the important nutritional recommendations of AHA. The debate on saturated fats has been continuing for the last one hundred years. The claims made against coconut oil in the AHA report do not stand up to standard systematic research results. ■

