

RETHINK *Productions Presents*

# \$TATIN NATION

The Great Cholesterol Cover-Up



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A film exposing the over-prescription of cholesterol-lowering medications and the misrepresentation of medical evidence

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# SYNOPSIS

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We are told that cholesterol is a major cause of heart disease. At least 40 million people are currently taking cholesterol-lowering medications, known as statins, and millions more people are avoiding foods that contain saturated fat and cholesterol.

The basic idea is that dietary saturated fat raises cholesterol levels, and these two substances somehow clog-up our arteries, causing a heart attack. This idea is often referred to as the diet-heart hypothesis.

However, a number of doctors and researchers have been challenging this hypothesis for decades, and the latest heart disease statistics reveal some alarming facts. Such as:

- People with high cholesterol tend to live longer
- People with heart disease tend to have low levels of cholesterol
- Cholesterol-lowering on a population level does not reduce the rate of heart disease

In addition, despite their widespread use, and description as “wonder drugs”, statin medications do not extend life for the majority of people who take them.

Cholesterol-lowering has become a huge global industry, generating around \$29 billion each year. Have the facts about heart disease, cholesterol and cholesterol medications been distorted by pharmaceutical companies and food manufacturers keen to increase their profits?

Statin Nation is the first film to investigate the scientific basis for the mass prescription of cholesterol-lowering medications.

The film was made on location in England, the United States, Denmark and Sweden.

# INTERVIEWEES

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## Dr Peter Langsjoen

Dr Peter H. Langsjoen has been practicing cardiology since 1985. After five years of invasive cardiology at the University of Texas Health Center at Tyler, Texas, he set up a private cardiology practice in Tyler and for the past 21 years has worked exclusively as a non-invasive cardiologist, specialising in congestive heart failure, primary & statin-induced diastolic dysfunction, and other diseases of the heart muscle.

Dr. Langsjoen has been involved with the clinical application of coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) since 1983 when he began working with his father, Per H. Langsjoen, M.D., F.A.C.C., the cardiologist who pioneered clinical research with CoQ10 in the United States.

Dr. Peter Langsjoen is a founding member of the Executive Committee of the International Coenzyme Q10 Association, he is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology, a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society, American College of Physicians, Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, Texas Club of Cardiologists, Texas Medical Association and Smith County Medical Society.

Coenzyme Q10 continues to be a major part of Dr. Langsjoen's clinical practice as well as an ongoing research endeavour. Over the past six years Dr. Langsjoen and his wife Alena have established a research laboratory in Tyler, Texas, for the measurement of both reduced and oxidised CoQ10 in both plasma and heart muscle. Dr. Langsjoen lectures on coenzyme Q10 all over the world.



## Dr Malcolm Kendrick

Dr Kendrick is a general practitioner, originally from Scotland, who has worked in family practice for almost twenty years. He has specialised in heart disease and set up the on-line educational website for the European Society of Cardiology. He is also a peer-reviewer for the British Medical Journal.

Dr Kendrick has always found heart disease fascinating. This is possibly because of the fact that, in his youth, Scotland had the highest rate of death from heart disease (coronary artery disease / atherosclerosis) in the world.

When he went to medical school he was told that the very high rate of heart disease in Scotland was caused by a diet containing far too much saturated fat - this raised Scottish cholesterol levels. The excess cholesterol was, in turn, deposited in the artery walls, thus narrowing them to the point where they blocked up - causing angina, heart attacks and death.

For years, he did not question this orthodoxy. Then, one day, he was on holiday in France. Whilst chewing on a fatty steak, dripping in butter, it suddenly struck him that the French ate rather a lot of saturated fat. Then he looked at the other classic ‘risk factors’ for heart disease in France. He found that, in comparison to the Scots, the French ate significantly more saturated fat, had the same cholesterol levels, the same blood pressure and the same HDL ‘good cholesterol’ levels. They also had the same average BMI and took slightly less exercise (on average). They smoked considerably more. In short, the French had much worse classical ‘risk factors’. However, they also had one tenth the rate of heart disease.

This so called ‘French paradox’ has now been widely publicised, however, the full extent of the paradox is hardly ever mentioned, and this is only one of many so called paradoxes. Dr Kendrick has been challenging the diet-heart hypothesis for decades. Dr Kendrick is the author of the book *The Great Cholesterol Con: the Truth About What Really Causes Heart Disease and How to Avoid it*.



### Professor Kausik Ray

Professor Ray is a clinical cardiologist and cardiovascular epidemiologist with an interest in both the primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease. He is professor of cardiovascular disease prevention and honorary consultant cardiologist at St George’s Hospital NHS Trust in South London.

Throughout his research career, Professor Ray has developed strong links with the British Heart Foundation (BHF). In his early career at the University of Sheffield, he was awarded a BHF junior research fellowship, then appointed a BHF international fellow at Harvard Medical School, and most recently, the BHF funded his former post as an intermediate fellow and senior clinical research associate at the University of Cambridge.

Professor Ray’s research interests focus on cardio metabolic risk, where factors such as high blood pressure or glucose levels are assessed, preventative cardiology, cardiovascular epidemiology and clinical trials. He has conducted some of the most definitive studies to date on lipid lowering and glycaemic control for the prevention of cardiovascular outcomes, which have contributed towards national and international guidelines.

Professor Ray has written over 130 research papers and book chapters, and sits on the editorial board of several medical journals. He is also a reviewer for the Medical Research Council and an external expert for the National Institute for Health and Clinical Evidence (NICE). In the past decade he has successfully attracted grants totalling about £4 million.

# INTERVIEWEES

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## Dr Paul J. Rosch

Dr Rosch is President of The American Institute of Stress, and Clinical Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at New York Medical College. He is also Honorary Vice President of the International Stress Management Association.

Dr Rosch had a Fellowship at the Institute of Experimental Medicine and Surgery at the University of Montreal with Dr. Hans Selye, who originated the term “stress” as it is currently used, and has co-authored works with Dr. Selye as well as Dr. Flanders Dunbar, who introduced the term, “psychosomatic” into American medicine.

Dr. Rosch has appeared on numerous national and international television programs, including 60 Minutes, The Today Show, Good Morning America, Nova, CBS, NBC, PBS, BBC and CBC.

His editorials and comments have been published in major medical journals such as the New England Journal of Medicine, Annals of Internal Medicine, Journal of The American Medical Association, British Medical Journal and The Lancet. He has been interviewed and widely quoted in Time, Fortune, Newsweek, The Reader’s Digest, The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post, The Times, and numerous other publications.

Dr Rosch was the 1998-99 President of The Pavlovian Society: an organisation of distinguished international scientists devoted to integrating basic and clinical research and has been the recipient of many honors, including the Outstanding Physician’s Award of the New York State Medical Society.

Dr Rosch has also served as: President of the New York State Society of Internal Medicine, Expert Consultant on Stress to the United States Center for Disease Control, President of the Yonkers Academy of Medicine, Clinical Professor of Medicine in Psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

He is a Fellow and Life Member of the American College of Physicians, Diplomate of the National Board of Medical Examiners, Emeritus Member of The Endocrine Society, Fellow of the Council of Epidemiology of the American Heart Association, Fellow of the Council on Geriatric Cardiology, and Fellow of The Royal Society of Medicine.

Dr Rosch was unanimously elected in 1999 as a Full Member of the prestigious Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, one of only six foreigners who have received this honor in the past twenty years.



### Dr John Abramson

Dr Abramson is a Lecturer on Health Care Policy at Harvard Medical School. He has appeared on NBC's Today Show, CNN's American Morning, Lou Dobbs Tonight, and all of the other major American networks.

For more than 20 years, Dr Abramson practiced family medicine in a small town north of Boston. He got a great deal of satisfaction from this work and enjoyed helping family members from different generations through their medical concerns. However, through his independent research he began to notice an alarming trend within medicine.

Dr Abramson noticed that the 'scientific evidence' that clinical decisions are based on was becoming increasingly spun by commercial interests. He saw that tests that were unlikely to improve patient care were being routinely ordered, and new (more expensive) medications increasingly prescribed that offered no additional benefit than cheaper older versions.

As a result of these observations, Dr Abramson decided to leave family practice and concentrate on his own independent research into these issues. In 2004, his book *Overdosed America: the Broken Promise of American Medicine* was published. Dr Abramson has also published articles in the Lancet raising questions about the current cholesterol lowering guidelines.



### Dr. Katherine Farady

Dr Farady graduated from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston in 1984, where she was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha, the medical honour society.

She completed an internship in Internal Medicine at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, and the first eleven years of her medical career were spent as a medical officer in the U.S. Navy; with assignments in San Diego, Long Beach, CA, Washington, D.C., and Charleston, S.C. She completed her dermatology residency at the University of Texas in San Antonio in 1992, and in 1995, Dr Farady left the Navy to return to her hometown of Austin, where she now has a private practice.

Dr Farady was prescribed a statin medication and suffered a range of adverse effects which resulted in her having to take several other medications.

# INTERVIEWEES

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## Dr Natasha Campbell-McBride

Dr Natasha Campbell-McBride is a medical doctor with two postgraduate degrees: Master of Medical Sciences in Neurology and Master of Medical Sciences in Human Nutrition.

She graduated as a medical doctor in Russia. After practising for five years as a Neurologist and three years as a Neurosurgeon she started a family and moved to the UK.

She is well known for developing a concept of GAPS (Gut And Psychology Syndrome), which she described in her book *Gut And Psychology Syndrome: Natural Treatment for Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Depression and Schizophrenia*, now in its second edition. Thousands of people around the world follow the highly successful GAPS Nutritional Protocol to help themselves and their families.

Dr Campbell-McBride works as a nutritional consultant with patients who have heart disease, high blood pressure, arrhythmia, stroke and other complications of atherosclerosis. She has become acutely aware of the existing confusion about nutrition and these conditions, which spurred an intensive study into this subject. The result of this research was her book *Put Your Heart In Your Mouth! What Really Is Heart Disease And What We Can Do To Prevent And Even Reverse It*.

Dr Campbell-McBride is a keynote speaker at many professional conferences and seminars around the world.



## Dr. Rajendra Sharma

Dr Sharma qualified as a doctor in 1984 and has practiced Integrated Medicine for the last 20 years. He has practiced in Europe, India and the USA.

Dr Sharma is also the Secretary of The British Society of Ecological Medicine and was Medical Director of The Hale Clinic, Europe's largest centre for complimentary and alternative medicine. He currently continues to work with over 100 associates and practitioners.





## Barry Groves PhD

Barry Groves originally trained as an electronic engineer and was commissioned in the Royal Air Force with which he served until 1982. After marrying in 1957, Barry and his wife, Monica, became very overweight. They tried low-calorie dieting and several other approaches, with no long-term success. Then, in 1962, Barry discovered the low-carb diet. It worked spectacularly well - and still works today. Thus began his interest in nutrition and the aetiology of obesity. He decided to leave the RAF at the earliest opportunity to research the subject.

He retired from the RAF in 1982, at the age of 45, and began full time research, later broadening the scope of his research to the relationship between diet and other modern 'diseases of civilisation' such as heart disease and cancer. As a result of his research, he realised that the perceived wisdoms, both of low-calorie dieting for weight loss and 'healthy eating' for the control of heart disease, were seriously flawed. The public were being misled largely, it seemed, to increase the profits of commercial interests. He began to give talks and lectures, at first locally and then, increasingly over an ever-wider area. He has lectured as far afield as Western Australia.

Barry has been a columnist writing about dietary and health matters for several health-related magazines. His writing earned him the Sophie Coe Prize at the 2002 Oxford Symposium on Food History. Barry has written a number of popular and more technical books which have been published in countries as far apart as Argentina and Russia, as well as all English-speaking countries. His most well known book is *Trick and Treat: How Healthy Eating is Making Us Ill*.

Barry has also won a total of eleven Gold Medals for Flight Archery at an international level, which he took up in 1982 for relaxation.



## Tony Wood

Tony was prescribed a statin medication, which he took for a number of years. He experienced a range of health problems during this time that he strongly feels were caused by the statin. This included depression, memory problems, muscle / joint pain, weakness and neuropathy.

# INTERVIEWEES

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## Uffe Ravnskov M.D. PhD

Dr Ravnskov graduated in 1961 from the University of Copenhagen. Dr Ravnskov has held various appointments at surgical, nephrological, neurological, and paediatric medical departments in Denmark and Sweden. He was awarded his PhD in 1973 at the University of Lund.

As an independent researcher, Dr Ravnskov was honoured by the Skrabanek Award in 1999 given by Trinity College of Dublin, Ireland. In 2007 he was also awarded the Leo-Huss-Walin Prize for Independent Thinking in Natural Sciences and Medicine.

Dr Ravnskov is a member of the editorial board of several scientific journals. His book *The Cholesterol Myths* is considered by many to be the classic text on the subject and has been translated into several languages. Before the English translation came out, the book was set on fire on Finnish national television.

Dr Ravnskov's articles and letters challenging the cholesterol hypothesis have been widely published in the most respected medical journals in the world.

More recently, Dr Ravnskov has written two new books that are less technical but more accessible to the general reader: *Fat and Cholesterol are GOOD for You* and *Ignore The Awkward! How the Cholesterol Myths Are Kept Alive*.



## Pamela Sharp

Pamela took a statin for more than two years and experienced severe memory loss, pain and a general feeling of being very unwell. She says that the statin has left her with permanent memory and cognitive problems. She now moderates an internet support group for people affected by statins that has more than 8,000 members.

# ABOUT THE PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

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## Justin Smith

Prior to making this film, Justin worked as a personal trainer, sports massage therapist and nutrition coach. For 4 years, he was based at the BBC in West London.

In 2007, Justin set out to write a book about common nutritional myths. At this time, he was already aware of the issues surrounding cholesterol and planned to devote one chapter of his book to this subject. However, after looking into the subject in more detail, he was shocked to find just how much evidence, contrary to the diet-heart hypothesis, existed. The natural progression was to base his whole book on this subject.

Justin's book *\$29 Billion Reasons to Lie About Cholesterol* was published in 2009, and the following year, he started the preliminary work on the documentary *Statin Nation*.

Before his career as a health practitioner, Justin obtained a degree in engineering. He believes that this scientific background has provided him with the ability to evaluate published research and the conclusions that are drawn from it.

Justin was also a competitive cyclist for nine years.

## Q&A WITH JUSTIN SMITH

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### Why did you make this film?

I have made this film out of sheer frustration with the current situation. To date, most of the information that people receive about this subject is provided directly or indirectly by the pharmaceutical companies. This information is heavily biased, of course, toward increasing company profits, with a disregard for peoples' health.

### In the film, you raise some important issues concerning statin medications. How would you like people to react to this?

My approach, with this film, is to provide people with information to make better informed decisions about their own health. Each person should make a personal decision about the issues raised.

I hope that the film will prompt more people to ask their doctor important questions like: if I take this cholesterol medication, how much longer might I live? This question is important because most people will not receive any life extension from statins.

While statins may, in some cases, slightly reduce the risk of heart problems, at the same time statins also increase the risk for other serious diseases. So, overall there is usually no net benefit.

There is some evidence that cholesterol medications can be beneficial for middle-aged men who have already had at least one heart attack. However, the benefit here has got nothing to do with cholesterol lowering. It relates to the positive effects that statins can have on inflammation and plaque stabilisation. In this situation, there is some life extension, but it is difficult to say how much. The life extension even here may still only be a few days or weeks and this, of course, has to be balanced against the adverse effects of statins.

In addition, there is a well established connection between low cholesterol levels and a shorter life span. So, even if the statin was beneficial during middle-age, the adverse effects are likely to drastically outweigh any positive effects as the person reaches old age.

### Was the film commissioned /How was the film funded?

I desperately wanted to make this film and I knew that getting it commissioned would be difficult and time consuming. Therefore, I invested some money myself and managed to raise around £7,000 from crowd funding.

In addition, I managed to build a crew of people who are also passionate about this subject and would be willing to work on a deferred payment basis. The crew have all been willing to defer their payment until the film is released.

Originally, I planned to go through the traditional route (festivals and commissioning editors etc.) once the film was finished. However, I am concerned that this might take several months to a year, possibly longer, and I have a burning desire to expose this issue as soon as possible.

Personally, I feel that the timing is right to present this information to people. I hope to gain the interest of a major broadcaster in the UK, in the United States, or elsewhere but in the meantime I plan to release the film online via video on demand.

### Do you think that people can freely consume cholesterol-rich foods?

Well, the idea that saturated fats and cholesterol simply clog-up the arteries has never been proven scientifically. It was just an idea.

In addition, there are many fascinating facts. Such as, the foods that contain cholesterol also contain large amounts of the nutrients we know protect the heart. We have been told to avoid cholesterol-rich foods, but these foods often contain antioxidants and high levels of vitamins that keep our arteries healthy.

# STATS ARE DODGY

## '£450m drug' does not prevent heart disease



**AROUND 75 per cent** of the people who take a statin do not have a diagnosed heart problem.

They are given the drug in the hope of preventing it in the future. But clinical trials have not shown any life extension when statins are used in this way.

In some cases, statins may very slightly reduce the chance of heart attack — but they can increase the risk of other serious diseases. As Dr Malcolm Kendrick says in the documentary: "You might change what's written on the death certificate, but you won't change the date."



Cover up... statins

**STATINS** taken by seven million Brits are not the best way to prevent heart disease, a study has revealed. Changing diet is more effective than the cholesterol-lowering pills in helping the heart and staving off strokes, say scientists. The warning comes as figures

**EXCLUSIVE** by EMMA LITTLE Health and Science Editor show statins — which cost the NHS £450million a year — have had **NO** effect on Britain's heart disease rate. Cardiologists say the drugs have a role to play, but are not a cure-all. Prof. Kausik Ray, of St George's Healthcare Trust, London, said: "Statins are an effective, cheap treatment but I'm not in favour of mass medication

because everyone should be treated on an individual basis. "For people with no family history of heart problems and others deemed a low risk, other approaches should be used, like eating a good diet rich of fish, lean meat, vegetables and low in saturated fat". Exercise is also important to heart health, he added. The professor is among experts contributing to a documentary to be aired next month called *Statin Nation*. The Great

**Cholesterol Cover-Up** The British Heart Foundation said statins played a "vital role" in lowering cholesterol and helping prevent heart attacks. Spokeswoman Maureen Talbot added: "You may be able head off the prospect of being prescribed statins by eating a healthy, balanced diet, keeping physically active and maintaining a healthy weight and body shape." emma.little@the-sun.co.uk

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## Benefits of statins are exaggerated and not always the best way to prevent heart disease, study claims

- NHS spends £450million a year on cholesterol-lowering drugs
- Most are prescribed as a preventative measure for heart disease, however experts admit they find it difficult to predict who is at risk

By CLAIRE BATES

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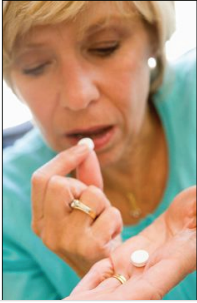
Statins are not the best way to prevent heart disease, according to new research.

The cholesterol-lowering drugs are taken by seven million people in the UK, costing the NHS £450million a year.

Conventional medical wisdom states they are a good 'cure-all' treatment for heart disease, but making dietary changes could be a more effective tactic, say scientists.

Professor Kausik Ray, of St George's Healthcare Trust in London, said statins are an effective treatment for many people with heart problems, especially if they have already had a heart attack or stroke.

However, this accounts for only a small amount of patients who are



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### FEMAL TODAY

- ▶ **Melanie Sykes debuts her sparkling engagement ring**  
The 42-year-old has announced she's set to wed toyboy lover of three months
- ▶ **Shouldn't Sophia be wearing the romper suit? Abbey Clancy reveals her legs**  
Seen carrying daughter for family lunch date
- ▶ **What would Stacey say?**  
Ex-*EastEnders* actress Lacey Turner debuts new red hair as she gets covered in mud doing household chores

# CREDITS

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## INTERVIEWEES

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Dr Paul J. Rosch  
Dr Malcolm Kendrick  
Dr Uffe Ravnskov  
Dr John Abramson  
Dr Katherine Farady  
Dr Rajendra Sharma  
Dr Natasha Campbell-McBride  
Barry Groves PhD  
Professor Kausik Ray  
Tony Wood  
Pamela Sharp

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