

New Blood Test Helps Predict Risk of Coronary Heart Disease

U.S. Food and Drug Administration Approves PLAC™ Test

(NAPSA)—Forty-four-year-old Doug Rofheart thought he was an unlikely candidate for heart disease. “My cholesterol wasn’t high. I exercised. I didn’t smoke. There was no family history of that kind of heart disease at a young age,” says Mr. Rofheart. To his surprise, Doug developed chest pains, and wound up in the hospital with advanced heart disease, which physicians caught just in time. “It was a big shock to me to be so healthy, and to exercise, and to watch my diet, yet still have problems with heart disease.”

For patients like Doug, a new blood test may help make a difference in preventing a cardiac event, such as a heart attack. The PLAC™ test, recently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, can help physicians better predict if their patients are at risk for heart disease. The PLAC™ test measures the level of an enzyme in the blood known as Lp-PLA2.

What you need to know about heart disease

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the leading cause of death in the United States. Each year, more than 500,000 Americans die due to heart disease. However, nearly half of all individuals who experience a heart attack don’t show any evidence of traditional risk factors, such as smoking, elevated cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity or family history.

More Information About the PLAC™ Test

- The PLAC™ test is a new blood test which can help you and your doctor determine your risk for heart disease, even if you have “normal” levels of LDL—also known as “bad” cholesterol.
- Between one-third and one-half of heart attacks occur in people considered to have “normal” cholesterol levels.
- The PLAC™ test should be used in conjunction with other available tools, and a physical examination by your physician, to determine if you are at risk for heart disease.
- For more information about the PLAC™ test, visit www.plactest.com



Heart disease is often caused by the build-up of fatty deposits called plaques along the lining of the arteries. Inflammation can cause the plaque to become unstable. Heart attacks occur when plaque ruptures, causing a blood clot to form, which blocks the blood supply to other areas of the heart. Lp-PLA2 plays an important role in the development of inflammation in the artery or blood vessel, initiating a process which may lead to a heart attack.

Identifying new risk factors, such as Lp-PLA2 levels, remains one of the most important steps in preventing the development of heart disease. “The PLAC test enables us to better determine who

is at risk before an unfortunate cardiac event occurs, allowing both the patient and his or her physician to take proactive and preventative measures such as lifestyle modification or therapeutic intervention,” said Dr. Christie Ballantyne, MD, Director of the Center for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention at Baylor College of Medicine and the Methodist DeBakey Heart Center in Houston.

Scientific evidence

A medical study conducted by Dr. Ballantyne examined the blood of adult men and women from four different regions in the United States. The results showed that high levels of Lp-PLA2 significantly increased an individual’s risk for heart disease. This was especially true in people with “normal” levels of the so-called “bad” LDL-cholesterol—levels below 130.

Even though individuals with normal cholesterol are often considered to be at very low risk for heart disease, in Dr. Ballantyne’s study, those with low-cholesterol were twice as likely to develop heart disease if they had high levels of Lp-PLA2. “Somewhere between one-third and one-half of heart attacks occur in people considered to have normal cholesterol,” according to Dr. Ballantyne. “This clearly indicates the need to assess other factors beyond LDL-cholesterol.”