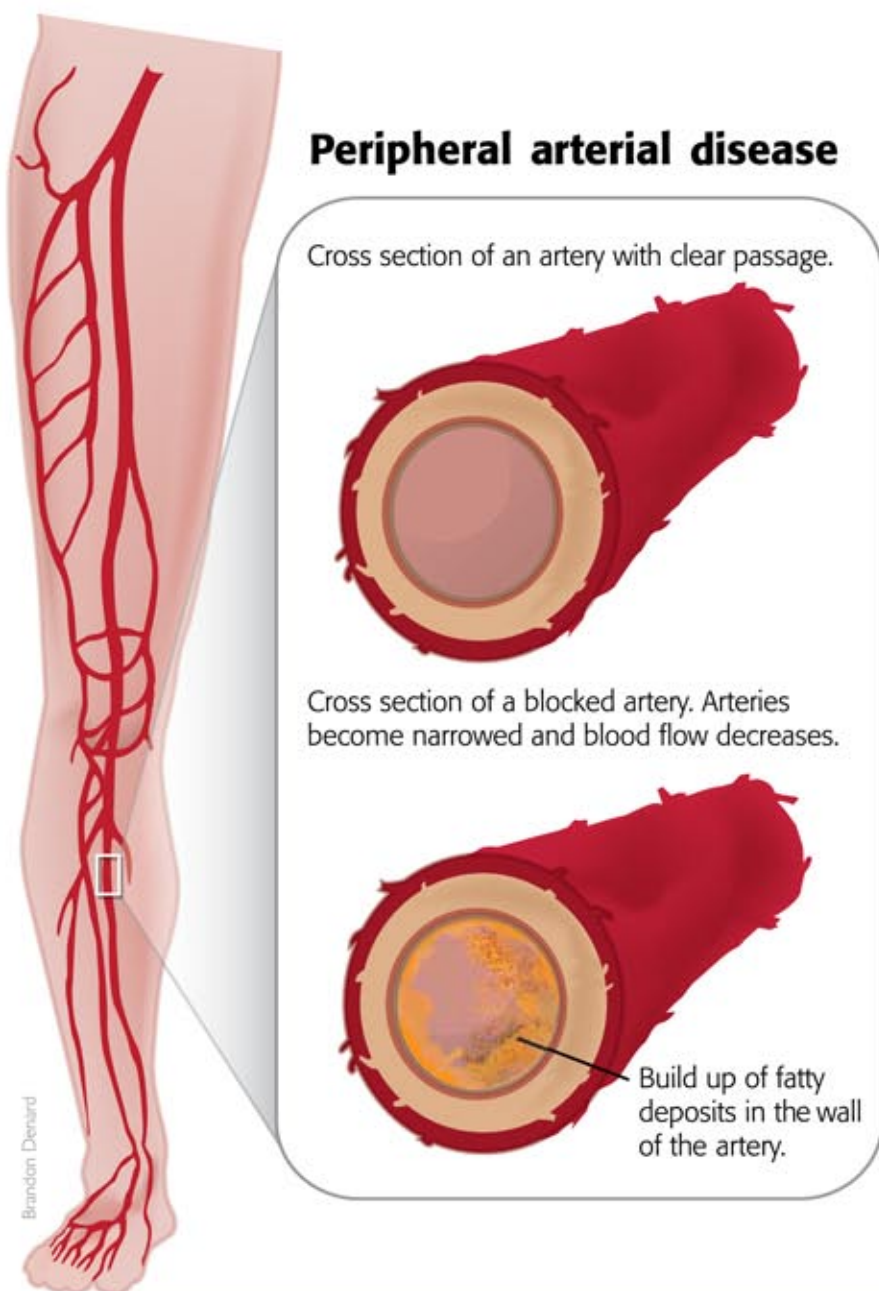


Saving life and limbs

Daily flaxseed consumption can prevent death by peripheral arterial disease

By Anupriya Dewan and Vanessa Perkins



Peripheral arterial disease (PAD), caused by blood clots in the arteries, is sometimes called a silent killer. It can reduce or completely block blood flow to peripheral limbs, which can lead to the need for amputation, or be deadly. Research has found that regular flaxseed consumption may reduce the risk.

Dr. Randy Guzman, a vascular surgeon and researcher at St. Boniface General Hospital in Winnipeg, and his research team are conducting clinical trials to determine if moderate, daily consumption of ground flaxseed can prevent or treat PAD.

Research has revealed that flax consumption may reduce atherosclerosis and irregular heart rhythms. The clinical study involving patients aims to determine if consuming as little as 30 grams of ground flaxseed per day can reduce PAD's progression, or other cardiovascular events, such as a stroke or heart attack.

"We're trying to find dietary changes everyone can make that directly increase survival rates," says Guzman.

The risk of PAD increases as one ages, yet many patients don't show any symptoms until the disease progresses further into limb or heart-related problems. Guzman also has concerns about Canada's aging population, as PAD could put a strain on the healthcare system.

The research trials done on older patients have shown that the omega-3 fatty acids contained in flaxseed reduce cholesterol and the likelihood of blood platelets clotting together. By adding a moderate amount of flaxseed to their diet, Guzman says the older population could be spared some of the consequences of this devastating disease.

Also working on this project are Chantal Dupasquier, a PhD candidate in the University of Manitoba's Department of Physiology and Drs. Grant Pierce, Bram Ramjiawan, Delfin Rodriguez-Leyva and Peter Zahradka from the Canadian Centre for Agri-Food Research in Health and Medicine.

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