

Understanding Cardiovascular Risk & Treatment: INSIGHTS FROM PATIENTS IN EUROPE

More than 85 million Europeans live with cardiovascular disease.¹ Despite the fact that it is both preventable and treatable, the condition claims 4 million European lives each year.

To gauge Europeans' knowledge about high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease, the European Alliance for Patient Access created a questionnaire completed by more than 280 patients from the United Kingdom, France and Italy.* The respondents, most of whom have a personal history of cardiovascular disease, offered clear feedback:

- Not all patients have enough information to protect themselves from preventable heart attacks and strokes.
- Conversations between patients and their primary health care providers don't always address patients' cardiovascular health risks or prevention and treatment measures.
- Patients need more educational materials. Health care providers and patient organisations have a role in increasing awareness by circulating accessible materials online and in print.

**Trend UK, ALT Onlus (Italy), ANHET (France)*



QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

Awareness & Personal Impact

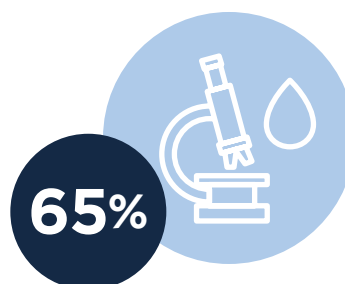
While most patients (86%) reported knowing their own cholesterol level, more than 65% of patients did not know with certainty how cholesterol levels are measured. Having a simple blood test can reveal if one's cholesterol is at an optimal level. High LDL-C, also known as “bad” cholesterol, causes heart attacks and strokes.² Despite this causal association, 37% of patients admitted their understanding of how cholesterol levels impact heart attack, stroke and death is lacking.

Nearly 90% of patients indicated they knew something about cardiovascular disease risk factors and almost all (97%) knew their own risk factors. Just one in 10 patients didn't know about their family history of cardiovascular health, which is also important for making one's personal health plan.

Such a high level of knowledge among the patients who completed the questionnaire, those with a personal history of cardiovascular disease, is reassuring. However, that level of awareness is probably not as likely among the general population. Everyone should know – with confidence – common cardiovascular disease risk factors such as a high fat diet, smoking and lack of physical activity.

In terms of managing their cholesterol and risk factors, roughly 30% of patients lacked certainty about what lifestyle choices would reduce their cholesterol and improve their health. Lifestyle changes, such as stopping smoking, along with initiating use of innovative treatments, such as statins or PCSK9 inhibitors, can aid secondary prevention. More than a quarter (28%) of patients indicated they didn't know what medicines are used to address high cholesterol.

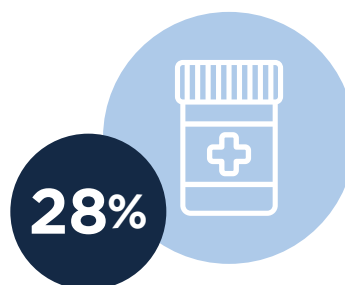
Patients lacked certainty about:



How cholesterol levels are measured



What lifestyle choices reduce cholesterol



What medicines are used to address high cholesterol

Health Care Providers' Role

Health care providers help patients develop a comprehensive understanding of their health, including knowing their cholesterol and addressing cardiovascular risk factors. Yet patients were split on how they felt about conversations with their health care providers.

More than three-quarters (78%) felt comfortable asking their health care provider questions about cholesterol and cardiovascular health. And two-thirds said that, when their health care provider explains issues like cholesterol management, they do so in language that's easy to understand.

But the comprehensive, personalised discussion that patients need doesn't always take place. About half (55%) of patients have been asked by their primary health care provider about their family's history with cholesterol, heart attack, stroke and cardiovascular disease – leaving a sizeable portion of patients who have not. Meanwhile, just 28% of patients indicated their primary health care provider has shared educational resources to help them understand more about cardiovascular health. And approximately 50% of patients reported that their health care provider is “very stretched” and doesn't always have time to talk about cardiovascular health in detail.

PROS:



78% OF PATIENTS

Feel **comfortable asking their doctor questions** about cholesterol



66% OF PATIENTS

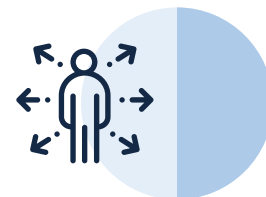
Say their doctor **explains things in easy-to-understand language**

CONS:



ONLY 28% OF PATIENTS

Have **received educational resources** from their doctor



50% OF PATIENTS

Say their health care **provider is too stretched to talk in depth** about heart health



Patients' Need for Resources

Nearly all respondents (95%) agreed that patients need specific, achievable goals to lower their bad cholesterol and improve their cardiovascular health. Yet fewer than half (48%) felt strongly that they have all the information needed to proactively manage their cholesterol and cardiovascular health.

Nearly 93% indicated that patients need more materials about managing cholesterol and cardiovascular health. Similarly, more than 88% of patients indicated making materials in multiple forms, such as videos, written documents and graphics, helps to ensure key information is available to patients from all walks of life.



93% OF PATIENTS NEED

Educational materials about managing cholesterol and cardiovascular health



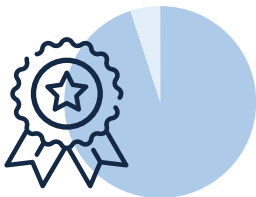
88% OF PATIENTS NEED

Educational content in multiple forms



93% OF PATIENTS NEED

Support from a family member or friend



95% OF PATIENTS NEED

Specific, achievable goals to lower their LDL

Likewise, having the support of a family member or friend can be important in empowering patients to take control of their high cholesterol, according to 93% of patients.

And nine in 10 patients felt that patient organisations can play an important role in educating and empowering patients about cardiovascular risk. Sharing patient-based experiences and success stories about regaining control of high cholesterol or overcoming a debilitating stroke are relatable and can motivate patients who may feel alone in their experience.



CONCLUSION

Knowing about the impact of high cholesterol and understanding one's risk factors for cardiovascular disease are necessary for patients to take control of their heart health. Patient-oriented educational materials can help spread relevant information, and patient organisations and health care providers should reinforce key messages about prevention and treatment. Collectively, these efforts have the potential to increase Europeans' knowledge base about cardiovascular disease and reduce its debilitating impact on individuals and families.

REFERENCES

1. European Heart Network. European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics 2017. Retrieved from: <http://www.ehnheart.org/cvd-statistics.html>
2. European Heart Journal. 2019 ESC/EAS Guidelines for the management of dyslipidaemias: lipid modification to reduce cardiovascular risk: The Task Force for the management of dyslipidaemias of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and European Atherosclerosis Society (EAS). <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurheartj/ehz455>



About the European Alliance for Patient Access

The European Alliance for Patient Access, a division of the Global Alliance for Patient Access, is a network of physicians and patients advocating for patients' access to approved medical therapies and appropriate clinical care.

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