

Name: Nigel Mellor

Is this input submitted as an organisational or individual response? Individual

Are you happy for your response to be published by the Academy? Yes

Letter from Mr Nigel Mellor to the Chief Medical Officer that he agreed to share with the Academy to in response to the "How does society use evidence to judge the risks and benefits of medicines?" call for evidence.

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Review of the use of Statins

Dear Professor Davies,

I was most interested to learn that you have asked for a review to be undertaken of the use of Statins. I write to provide some recent, personal and factual information which I believe and hope will be of relevance to this review.

I think it best to give a summary of my experience from the beginning to ensure as full a picture is available as is practical. I have had a generally fit and healthy life and am now 71.

Looking back, I visited the doctor for a check- up in the late 1990s which included a blood test which gave a reading for Cholesterol of just over 5. No action was recommended in response to this reading at that time.

I went for a further check- up including another blood test in about 2009 and the Cholesterol reading was 4 at which point I was advised to start taking Statins. I asked how long I might have to take this drug and was told "for life". I was not happy to commit to this and did not take up the advice.

Moving to my more recent experience, I had occasion to visit the doctor in February due to feeling unwell and a further blood test showed a Cholesterol level of 6.2. I was strongly advised to take Statins. I explained that I was keen to try to understand why the level was so high and that I would prefer to take other steps, if possible, to reduce the level by avoiding the use of drugs. I assured the doctor that I would consider her advice seriously and needed time to think about things.

I then began to make certain changes in my diet and tried to take more exercise whilst being conscious of the part stress might play in affecting one's health.

Since the reason for my visit to the doctor required further examination etc. I had to revisit the surgery after about a two or three months and I asked for an update reading of my cholesterol. This was done and a reading of 4.6 resulted! I understand this is an acceptable level and can have another check in a year's time.

So in about 3 months I have reduced the level of my cholesterol in my blood by about 25% without recourse to Statins or other drugs for that matter. Had I not strongly believed that to take Statins for life would be counter -intuitive, I would now be well into the first year of

a lifelong drug dependency with all the potential for harmful side effects, not to mention the needless waste of scarce NHS funds on an unnecessary "cure".

I suspect that my experience is not unique, sadly it may well be quite common. There clearly seems to be an urgent need for doctors to explain how and why a person's cholesterol level may vary and, if not more importantly, what a person can do for themselves to try to address with the problem. If information on the courses of action available was placed before patients more clearly, genuinely and firmly by the doctor (change your lifestyle or be on drugs for the rest of your life), then it seems highly likely many more people would be enabled to take more interest in and begin to assume more influence (or even control) over their own health.

I hope this small personal account is helpful to the review in its consideration of the use of Statins. I would of course be willing to provide any further information which might be of assistance to the review.

Thank you for your time in considering this contribution.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nigel Mellor".

Nigel Mellor

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