

God's Unlikely Healers

I find it remarkable that God has chosen to hide lifesaving chemicals in His creation.

Question:

Recently I heard that the saliva of vampire bats contains a powerful clot-busting agent for treating victims of strokes and heart attacks. Would you comment on this?

L.S., Louisville, Kentucky

Answer:

Vampire bats—the common name of *Desmodus rotundus*—live primarily in Mexico, and Central American and South American countries. There are only three species of this type of bat: *Desmodus rotundus*, *Diaemus youngi* and *Diphylla ecaudata*. Contrary to folklore and superstition about these creatures, they grow only to about the length of a mouse—about 2-3/4 inches—and rarely prey on humans.

Amazingly, the saliva of these bats contains a very powerful anticoagulant. It prevents the blood of their prey (which they extract primarily from cows, pigs, horses or birds) from clotting. In fact, the anticoagulant in vampire bat saliva is 20 times stronger than any known anti-clotting agent and actually dissolves blood clots.

Dr. Rob Medcalf, a senior research fellow at Monash University's Department of Medicine in Melbourne, Australia, carried out research on the bat enzyme with colleagues. The results of their research were published in January in the American Heart Association's journal, *Stroke*.

“When a vampire bat bites its victim, it secretes this powerful clot-dissolving substance so that the victim’s blood will keep flowing, allowing the bat to feed,” Medcalf said.

Eighteen months of clinical trials on stroke patients indicate the bat enzyme could be used to dissolve blood clots in humans, possibly for up to three times longer than the commonly used treatment t-PA. An interesting point to note is that the anticoagulant does not increase the risk of internal bleeding.

Research is showing that the chemical in vampire bat saliva is able to open closed arteries twice as fast as the main drugs of choice. In the future this could be used to help treat heart attack or stroke patients. Uniquely, only the vampire bat has this chemical in its saliva. The hundreds of other species of bats do not.

This treatment is not as unorthodox as it sounds. Other such therapies are being studied. Another protein anticoagulant—found in the saliva of the poisonous Malayan Pit Viper—currently is being studied by a pharmaceutical company.

I find it remarkable that God has chosen to hide lifesaving chemicals in His creation in highly unlikely places—in some of the most repulsive animals and venomous reptiles on Earth.

Question:

I have elevated cholesterol and have been on Lipitor for years. Recently I learned I should be taking CoQ-10. Can you tell me why I need this supplement?

O.B., Kansas City, Missouri

Answer:

Lipitor is referred to as a statin. Other statin medications include Zocor, Mevacor and Pravachol. Statin drugs lower cholesterol by blocking an enzyme called HMG-CoA reductase, which is involved in the synthesis of cholesterol.

However, statins also block the synthesis of Coenzyme Q-10 (CoQ-10), and because any of the statin drugs lower the concentrations of CoQ-10, they can potentially lead to a severe deficit in mitochondrial energy.

In August 2001, another statin, called Baycol, was withdrawn from the market after it was linked with 31 deaths in the United States from severe rhabdomyolysis—muscle-cell breakdown and the release of the contents from the muscle cells into the bloodstream.

Rhabdomyolysis is extremely rare; however, myalgias or muscle aches and fatigue may also occur as a side effect of statin drugs. These generally improve with supplementation of CoQ-10. Anyone on a statin medication should take the lowest effective dose. I recommend you supplement with CoQ-10, at least 30 mg (milligrams) to 100 mg a day.

More than half of all Americans have elevated cholesterol, and more and more are being placed on potentially dangerous statin medications. I strongly believe diet and natural supplements are a much safer alternative.

Donald Colbert, M.D., is a family physician and nutrition expert. His book on better health, Toxic Relief, and his many Bible Cure booklets are available from Siloam Press at or at . Send questions to Doctor's Orders, 600 Rinehart Road, Lake

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