



HEART MATTERS

By Judith Riddle

February is American Heart Month, an important time to spread the word about the prevalence of cardiovascular disease and offer clients advice on ways to prevent it through healthful eating and regular exercise.

According to Health and Human Services, heart disease kills an estimated 630,000 Americans each year. It's the leading cause of death for men and women. In recognition of American Heart Month, *Today's Dietitian* is featuring several articles on how clients can prevent and lower their risk of developing heart disease and the associated risk factors such as hypertension and high cholesterol.

Valentine's Day also falls in this month, a special day when we bestow our loved ones with heart-shaped boxes of chocolate candy and other yummy confections. You can tell clients that chocolate, specifically dark chocolate, may be cardioprotective—sweet news they'd like to hear I'm sure. In our cover story, "Mining the Riches of Dark Chocolate," on page 24, you'll learn that research continues to suggest that the powerful antioxidants, or phytochemicals, in dark chocolate may lower heart disease and stroke risk—but only if the chocolaty morsels are eaten in moderation.

Our feature story "Using Natural Therapies to Treat Hypertension" discusses the role dietary supplements play in lowering blood pressure, based on the most comprehensive study to date published in the September 2011 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Hypertension*. Since many hypertensive patients take either prescription meds or nutritional supplements or, in many cases, both, it's a good idea to learn what the research says about their safety and efficacy and what you can recommend to clients.

The article "Get Cookin' With Whole Plant Fats" highlights the heart-health benefits of whole plant fats vs. animal fats. We drive home the point that it's the type of fat you eat that matters, not the amount, and we provide a delicious bread recipe made with avocados to share with clients.

And in our exclusive interview with Michael Jacobson, founder and executive director of The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), we highlight the many successes the CSPI has enjoyed for the past 40 years in its efforts to change nutrition policy in this country. Plus, Jacobson discloses what he has up his sleeves for the future of the organization as it continues to blaze trails in the political arena.

Please enjoy the issue!

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