

Egg lovers get good news

Truth told on cholesterol

By MANDY MIKULENCAK
Reporter

There may be good news on the horizon for people who have given up eggs to control high blood cholesterol levels, one Texas A&M research scientist says.

Dr. Barbara O'Brien, a research scientist in the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, says some people may be modifying their diets and giving up foods they enjoy, such as eggs, for no reason.

"About 15 to 20 percent of the population, if they eat a high cholesterol diet or a diet high in animal fat, their blood cholesterol levels will increase," O'Brien says. "But for the majority of the people, it doesn't make any difference."

"What needs to be considered is how an individual responds to cholesterol."

O'Brien explains that each person's body produces a certain amount of cholesterol required as a component of the cell membranes, but that a mechanism in the body normally blocks absorption of any excess obtained by eating foods high in cholesterol.

"This mechanism works as long as a person isn't consuming more than the body needs," O'Brien says. "But the diets people eat contain things like fibers that will prevent or interfere with the absorption of cholesterol. So if you have something in the diet that will prevent that ab-

sorption, the blood cholesterol level will not change."

O'Brien says her research deals with learning how different foods in the diet influence cholesterol metabolism.

Much of the concern about cholesterol comes from the fact that the American Heart Association recommends that people limit their intake of foods high in cholesterol, such as eggs.

O'Brien says the recommendations stem from the results of experiments conducted in the 1950s involving controlled, purified diets that showed when the amount of cholesterol in the diet was increased, the blood cholesterol levels increased.

Further research in the 1960s showed a link between the average blood cholesterol level of a group of people and the incidence of heart disease in that group.

"The problem with this is that people don't eat controlled, purified diets," she says. "They eat meat and potatoes, rice, and fruits and vegetables. So there are other things in the diet that affect the control of the cholesterol in the blood."

O'Brien's research included an experiment in which 29 men ate three eggs a day in addition to their regular diets.

Only two of the subjects showed an increase in blood cholesterol lev-

els after the experimental period was over, confirming O'Brien's belief that the body has a way of stopping the absorption of excess cholesterol.

She says, though, that there are people who cannot control the cholesterol levels because their shut-off mechanisms don't work properly, probably due to a genetic problem.

"I'm not encouraging people to eat more eggs," O'Brien says. "I'm trying to encourage people to realize that, if they like eggs, they can find out if there's any reason to deprive themselves."

"They can find out if they are in that fraction of the population that are susceptible to high blood cholesterol levels."

O'Brien says that for some people, cutting down on foods high in cholesterol could make a difference in their blood cholesterol levels, but that there is no evidence that modifying the diet will in any way reduce the risk of heart attacks.

"It's a terrible shame to have that correlation — eggs, cholesterol, heart disease," O'Brien says. "That correlation is so strong in the minds of some people. Eat eggs, have a heart attack."

"Eggs are such a nutritious food," O'Brien says. "Especially for young people. You cannot find a more complete food. And at the price, you just can't beat 'em."

Accounts sound at insolvent bank

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Customers lined up at Heights Savings Association branches found their accounts in order even though federal regulators declared the thrift insolvent, officials said.

Federal authorities declared Heights insolvent Friday, recapitalized it at an undisclosed amount above its \$9 million negative net worth and put it under new management of San Antonio Savings.

As customers reached the front of the lines, Heights employees told them that the association was sound and that it would continue to operate as before.

Heights, the ninth largest thrift in Houston, did not experience a significant number of withdrawals, said Russ Cobbler, senior vice president and director of marketing for San Antonio Savings.

"You've got to expect some with what everyone has heard about savings and loan failures in Maryland and Ohio."

Thrifts in those states did not have federal insurance as Heights did, he said.

Some people who remained concerned closed out their accounts. Others took the portion of their deposit exceeding the \$100,000 limit of Federal Savings and Loan Insurance

Corp. protection.

"I'm not sure what I'm going to do," said Henry Roberts as he waited for his turn to talk to a teller. "I've been a Heights customer ever since it opened up. I almost flipped when I heard it had problems."

"I put money in," said Raymond Goehring, his deposit slip in hand. "I'm not worried. I've done business with these people for years."

But Jim Lyon, a lifetime Heights customer, said he removed "damn near \$100,000. I want to get it while I can."

Federal regulators blamed the problems on millions of dollars in real estate loan losses.

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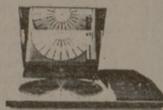
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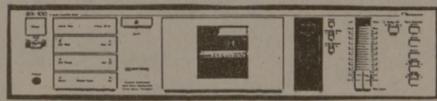


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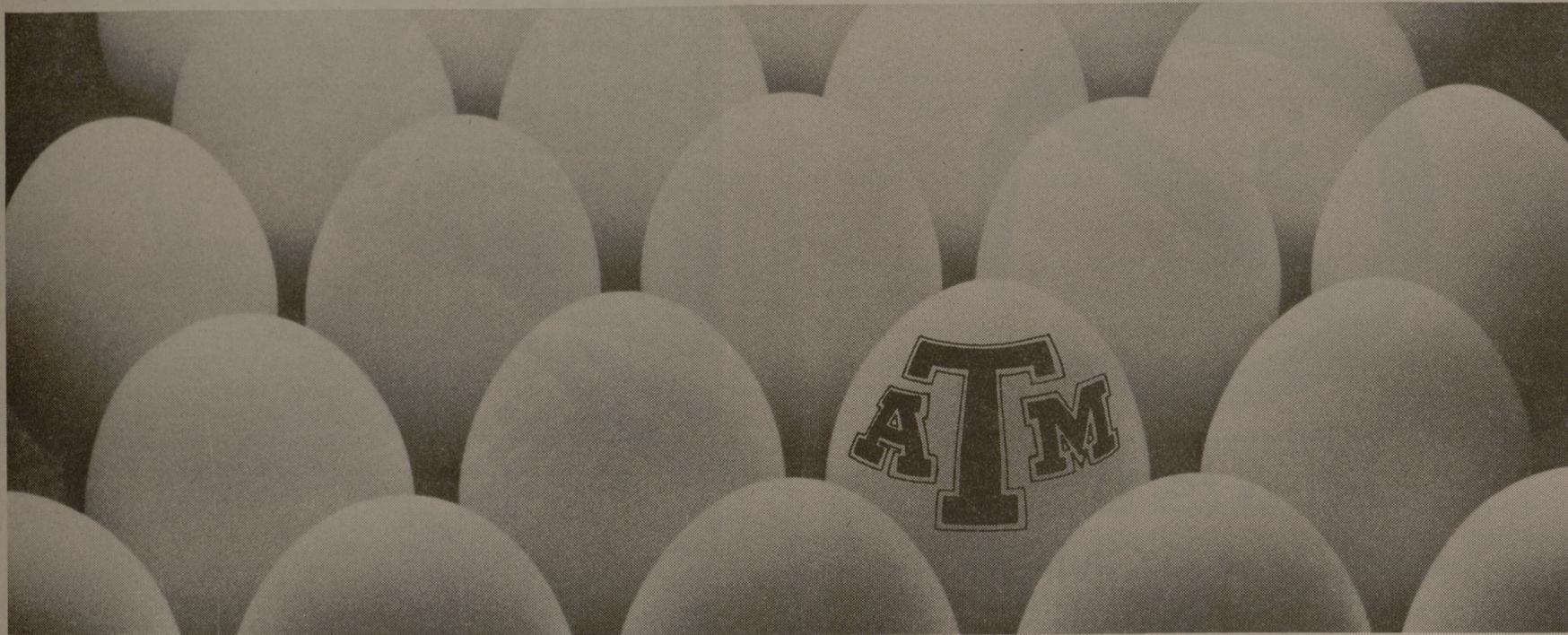
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