

Australia suggests new therapy to stabilise plaques associated with heart attack

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Plaque typically builds up on artery walls over many years and can clog or damage your arteries, which limits or stops blood flow to your heart muscle

A novel new therapy has been found to reduce harmful plaque in arteries and change its composition so it is less likely to rupture and cause a heart attack, following a clinical trial led by the Victorian Heart Institute (VHI) at Monash University.

The HUYGENS study treated high-risk patients over a 12 month period and was successful in a number of ways by combining commonly used statins together with a cholesterol-lowering drug called Evolocumab, which is already available to patients.

Using a new imaging method, researchers were able to view a change in the biology or composition of the harmful plaque in the arteries following treatment, not only reducing its size but changing it from hot to cold, rendering it effectively scar tissue and stable.

The degree to which this was successful was also directly related to how much the patient's bad cholesterol was lowered.

Lowering cholesterol is an important strategy in helping mitigate risk factors, but the new therapy was highly effective in reducing cholesterol ratios down to 0.7mmol/L, which is lower than the current clinical guidelines of less than or equal to 1.8 mmol/L suggested in the first instance.