

Cholesterol-Lowering Drugs Suggested

NEW YORK (AP) — The nation's first new guidelines in a decade for preventing heart attacks and strokes call for twice as many Americans — one-third of all adults — to consider taking cholesterol-lowering statin drugs.

The guidelines, issued Tuesday by the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology, are a big change. They offer doctors a new formula for estimating a patient's risk that includes many factors besides a high cholesterol level, the main focus now. The formula includes age, gender, race and factors such as whether someone smokes.

The guidelines for the first time take aim at strokes, not just heart attacks. Partly because of that, they set a lower threshold for using medicines to reduce risk.

The definition of high cholesterol isn't changing, but the treatment goal is. Instead of aiming for a specific number, using whatever drugs get a patient there, the advice stresses statins such as Lipitor and Zocor and identifies four groups of people they help the most.

"The emphasis is to try to treat more appropriately," said Dr. Neil Stone, the Northwestern University doctor who headed the cholesterol guideline panel. "We're going to give statins to those who are the most likely to benefit."

WTC Tower The Tallest Building In US

CHICAGO (AP) — The new World Trade Center tower in New York will replace Chicago's Willis Tower as the nation's tallest building when it is completed next year, an international panel of architects announced Tuesday.

The Height Committee of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat said that because the needle atop the New York skyscraper is a permanent spire and not an antenna it can be counted when measuring the structure's height.

The needle, measuring 408 feet tall, was more than enough to confirm Chicago is the Second City when it comes to tall buildings.

With the needle, 1 World Trade Center is a symbolically important 1,776 feet tall. Without it, the building would have been only 1,368 feet tall — well short of the 1,451-foot Willis Tower.

At stake was more than just the pride of two cities that feast on superlatives and the tourist dollars that might follow: 1 World Trade Center, with its beacon on top will stand as a monument to those killed in the 9/11 attacks, and its architects had sought to capture the echo of America's founding year in the structure's height.

Airline Merger Allowed By Justice Dept.

DALLAS (AP) — American Airlines and US Airways reached a deal with the government that lets the two form the world's biggest airline and opens up more room at key U.S. airports for low-cost carriers.

The settlement announced Tuesday — if approved by a federal judge — would end a fight with the U.S. Justice Department and head off a courtroom showdown later this month.

It preserves hub airports in Phoenix, Philadelphia, Charlotte and four other cities for at least three years. And it caps a series of mergers that have already eliminated four big U.S. airlines and stoked fear about higher travel prices.

For American, the nation's third-biggest airline, the deal lets parent AMR Corp. exit bankruptcy protection, repay creditors and reward shareholders.

At US Airways, the No. 5 U.S. carrier, shareholders will own 28 percent of the new company, employees stand to get more pay, and top executives will realize their dreams of running an airline even bigger than United or Delta.

Seat Belts On Buses Still Stymied

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a drunken driver on a California highway slammed into a bus carrying passengers to Las Vegas, killing 19, investigators said a lack of seat belts contributed to the high death toll. But 45 years later, safety advocates are still waiting for the government to act on seat belts and other measures to protect bus passengers.

Over the years, the National Transportation Safety Board has repeated its call for seat belts or some other means to keep passengers in their seats during crashes involving the large buses used for tours, charters and inter-city passenger service. About half of all such motorcoach fatalities are the result of rollovers, and about 70 percent of those killed in rollover accidents were ejected from the bus.

The board has also repeatedly recommended stronger windows that don't pop out from the force of a collision and help keep passengers from being ejected, and roofs that withstand crushing. Those recommendations are nearly as old as the seat belt recommendation. No requirements have been put in place, even though all have long been standard safety features in cars.

Hundreds of motorcoach passengers have died and even more have been injured, many severely, since the board made its initial recommendations. Victims have included college baseball players in Atlanta, Vietnamese churchgoers in Texas, skiers in Utah, gamblers returning to New York's Chinatown, and members of a high school girls' soccer team en route to a playoff match.

"In 1998, my father was launched like a missile (out) a bus window and landed on his head on pavement. He is now permanently brain damaged and cannot even take care of himself," one woman wrote regulators, urging them to act. "This issue has been around for decades and it needs to change, NOW, before more people die or are severely injured like my father."

Boy Who Came Home For X-Mas Dies

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — A boy whose last wish was to be home for his favorite holiday has died, two weeks after his hometown welcomed him with a Christmas tree outside his window and a motorcycle-riding Santa Claus.

Doctors had told the family of 13-year-old Devin Kohlman that he didn't have long to live so residents in the city of Port Clinton along Lake Erie spent the past few weeks giving him an early Christmas.

They sang carols outside the family's apartment, piled tons of shaved ice into drifting snow near his window and decorated a park with colorful strings of lights, reindeer cutouts and a red "Merry Christmas, Devin" sign.

Devin, who was diagnosed with brain cancer in the summer of 2012, died Monday afternoon, said family friend Roseann Hickman.

Family and friends gathered for a vigil after his death while an early-season snow fell over the city.

Aid Trickling Into Philippines

BY TODD PITMAN AND JIM GOMEZ

Associated Press

TACLOBAN, Philippines (AP) — Desperately needed food, water and medical aid are only trickling into this city that took the worst blow from Typhoon Haiyan, while thousands of victims jammed the damaged airport Tuesday, seeking to be evacuated.

"We need help. Nothing is happening. We haven't eaten since yesterday afternoon," pleaded a weeping Aristone Balute, an 81-year-old woman who failed to get a flight out of Tacloban for Manila, the capital. Her clothes were soaked from a pouring rain and tears streamed down her face.

Five days after the deadly disaster, aid is coming — pallets of supplies and teams of doctors are waiting to get into Tacloban — but the challenges of delivering the assistance means few in the stricken city have received help. Officials also were working to determine how many people had been killed, with the country's president saying the death toll could be lower than earlier feared.

"There is a huge amount that we need to do. We have not been able to get into the remote communities," U.N. humanitarian chief Valerie Amos said in Manila, launching an appeal for \$301 million to help the more than 11 million people estimated to be affected by the storm.

"Even in Tacloban, because of the debris and the difficulties with logistics and so on, we have not been able to get in the level of supply that we would want to. We are going to do as much as we can to bring in more," she said. Her office said she planned to visit the city.

Presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said relief goods were getting into the city, and the supply should increase now that the airport and a bridge to the island were open.

"We are not going to leave one person behind — one living person behind," he said. "We will help, no matter how difficult, no matter how inaccessible."

Tacloban, a city of about 220,000 people on Leyte island, bore the full force of the winds and the tsunami-like storm surges Friday. Most of



LUI SIU WAI/XINHUA/ZUMA PRESS/MCT
A resident sits on debris in typhoon-hit Leyte Province. The United Nations said it had released \$25 million in emergency funds to pay for emergency shelter materials and household items, and for assistance with the provision of emergency health services, safe water supplies and sanitation facilities. Its launching an appeal for more aid.

the city is in ruins, a tangled mess of destroyed houses, cars and trees. Malls, garages and shops have all been stripped of food and water by hungry residents.

The loss of life appears to be concentrated in Tacloban and surrounding areas, including a portion of Samar island that is separated from Leyte island by a strait. It is possible that other devastated areas are so isolated they have not yet been reached.

In Cebu, to the southwest, the Philippine air force has been sending three C-130s back and forth to Tacloban from dawn to dusk, and had delivered 400,000 pounds of relief supplies, Lt. Col. Marciano Jesus Guevara said. A lack of electricity in Tacloban means planes can't land there at night.

Guevara said the C-130s have transported nearly 3,000 civilians out of the disaster zone, and that the biggest problem in Tacloban is a lack of clean drinking water.

"Water is life," he said. "If you have water with no food, you'll survive."

A team from Midecins Sans Frontiers, complete with medical supplies, arrived in Cebu island Saturday looking for a flight to Tacloban, but hadn't left by Tuesday. A spokesman for the group said it was "difficult to tell" when it would be able to leave.

"We are in contact with the authorities, but the (Tacloban) airport is only for the Philippines military use," Lee Pik Kwan said in a telephone interview.

An Associated Press reporter drove through Tacloban for about 7 kilometers (4 miles) and saw more than 40 bodies. There was no evidence of any organized delivery of food, water or medical supplies, though piles of aid have begun to arrive at the airport. Some people lined up to get water from a hose, presumably from the city supply.

Doctors in Tacloban said they were desperate for medicine. At small makeshift clinic with shattered windows beside the city's ruined airport tower, army and air force medics said they had treated around 1,000 people for cuts, bruises, lacerations and deep wounds.

"It's overwhelming," said air force Capt. Antonio Tamayo. "We need more medicine. We cannot give anti-tetanus vaccine shots because we have none."

The longer survivors go without access to clean water, food, shelter and medical help, the greater chance of disease breaking out and people dying as a result of wounds sustained in the storm.

Thousands of typhoon victims were trying to get out of

Tacloban. They camped at the airport and ran onto the tarmac when planes came in, surging past a broken iron fence and a few soldiers and police trying to control them. Most didn't make it aboard the military flights out of the city.

Damaged infrastructure and bad communications links made a conclusive death toll difficult to estimate. The official toll from a national disaster agency rose to 1,774 on Tuesday.

Earlier, two officials on the ground had said they feared as many as 10,000 might be dead, but in a televised interview on CNN on Tuesday, President Benigno Aquino III said the death toll could be closer to 2,000 or 2,500.

The dead, decomposing and stinking, litter the streets or are buried in the debris.

There is also growing concern about recovering corpses from throughout the disaster zone. "It really breaks your heart when you see them," said Maj. Gen. Romeo Poquiz, commander of the 2nd Air Division.

"We're limited with manpower, the expertise, as well as the trucks that have to transport them to different areas for identification," Poquiz said. "Do we do a mass burial, because we can't identify them anymore? If we do a mass burial, where do you place them?"

Clinton: Obama Should Honor ACA Pledge

BY JIM KUHNHENN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Adding pressure to fix the administration's problem-plagued health care program, former President Bill Clinton says President Barack Obama should find a way to let people keep their health coverage, even if it means changing the law.

Clinton says Obama should "honor the commitment that the federal government made to those people and let them keep what they got."

The former president, a Democrat who has helped Obama promote the 3-year-old health law, becomes the latest in Obama's party to urge the president to live up to a promise he made repeatedly, declaring that the if Americans liked their health care coverage, they would be able to keep it under the new law.

Instead, millions of Americans have started receiving insurance cancellation letters. That, coupled with the troubled launch of the health care law's enrollment website, has prompted Republican critics and frustrated Democrats to seek corrections in the law.

House Republicans have drafted legislation to give consumers the opportunity to keep their coverage. Ten Senate Democrats are pushing for an unspecified extension of the sign-up period and several pressed Obama to do so in a private White House meeting last week. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La.,

has proposed legislation that would require insurance companies to reinstate the canceled policies.

The White House says it is working on changes that would ease the impact of the cancellations for some people. But the fixes under consideration are administrative actions, not congressional changes to the law.

White House spokesman Jay Carney on Tuesday reiterated the White House argument that the cancellations apply to only about 5 percent of Americans who obtained health care insurance. He also argued that more than half of those people receiving termination notices would benefit from better insurance at lower prices either through expanded Medicaid or through new health care marketplaces.

For the remainder, Carney said, "The president has instructed his team to look at a range of options."

The issue facing the administration now is how to

ease the impact on people who are losing their plans and don't qualify for subsidies to cover higher premiums. Carney said the White House opposes a House Republican bill, proposed by Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., that would allow insurers to keep selling insurance that doesn't offer the type of benefits required by the new law.

"Any fix that would essentially open up for insurers the ability to sell new plans that do not meet standards would create more problems than it fixed," he said.

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the second ranking Democratic leader in the Senate, on Tuesday said that while the law does face problems, he said some of the changes proposed by Republicans "are not friendly proposals. They're designed to derail this effort."

In an interview with CNN, Durbin cautioned that if consumers are permitted to keep policies that don't meet the law's minimum re-

quirements "it's going to be difficult for the insurance industry to produce a product that really is going to serve our needs and that they can adequately tell us what it costs."

Asked whether Obama lied to the public when he promised people that they could keep their policies, Durbin said: "A couple more sentences added would clarify it."

In his interview with the website www.OZY.com, Clinton overall praised the health care legislation. "The big lesson is that we're better off with this law than without it."

Carney noted that Clinton's own efforts to pass health care legislation during his presidency were blocked.

"The goal here is to achieve what President Clinton and presidents both Democratic and Republican sought to achieve in the past," he said.

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