Dynamic Chiropractic

WEIGHT LOSS / EATING HABITS

Scare Tactics: The Problem With "What the Health?"

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I have received many questions about the movie "What the Health?" from meat-eaters and people who know I am a meat-eater. In particular, they want to know if meat is safe. The movie goes to great lengths to suggest the fundamental dietary problem we have is eating meat. The movie alleges that if we just stopped eating meat, all would be better and diseases would go away.

In short, my impression is that the movie, at best, represents a dietary bias against meat. At worst, it is filled with misinformation and frankly disingenuous. I could go as far as to say that at times, I felt that I was being propagandized by angry, radical vegans.

My Personal View of Nutrition

I am personally interested in the "pro-inflammatory state," which drives most chronic diseases and is initiated and perpetuated by diet, stress, lack of sleep and lack of exercise, and modulated by nutritional supplements. The only foods I see as being overtly pro-inflammatory are refined sugar, flour and oils, which represent almost 60 percent of the calories consumed by Americans.

In practice and my latest book, I make the case for reducing / eliminating refined calories and replacing them with vegetables, fruit, roots/tubers, and nuts, and really not worrying too much about the other calories one consumes. In this context, a key factor is making sure our calorie intake is appropriate for our activity levels and body-weight goals, and leads to achieving proper markers of inflammation, such as fasting and postprandial glucose, waist:hip ratio, and hsCRP levels.

This means whether one chooses to be vegan, Paleo, keto, Mediterranean, Eskimo, Nordic, etc., it should be done in a fashion wherein objective markers of inflammation are the metric. This takes the emotion out of it all and keeps us in a place at which we can view eating from a physiological point of view.

Not surprisingly, "What the Health?" only adds to the emotion and confusion, going as far as to say that meat-eating causes diabetes and eating sugar has no negative effect at all. The movie alleges that eating meat causes insulin resistance and blood sugar goes up as a result. If this is true, then we could not reverse the metabolic syndrome and completely regress fatty liver in just three months on a diet that includes meat, fish and cheese, which we absolutely *can do*.[1]

I think diet should be about achieving goals, as in the normalization of inflammatory markers, not about demonizing an individual food as the single cause of all diseases.

"Plant-Based Diet": Code for Veganism

In recent years, the term *plant-based diet* has surfaced. I found it to be an odd term and frankly, unnecessary, and then realized it is a code term for a full-on vegan diet. In the conventional use of the term XYZ-based or in this case, plant-based, the –based usually connotes the foundation of something; not something exclusively "XYZ" or "plant" in this case.

In the movie, Dr. Barnard states that Americans should be eating a "plant-based" diet and not one that is "meat-based," as many currently do. The fact that this statement is made demonstrates the radical vegan nature of this movie. When using –based properly, the American diet is "refined sugar-, flour- and oil-based"; *not* meat-based. So, the real message of the movie is that we should all be vegans and eat no meat. They should have just been honest.

All Meat Is Not Created Equal

The argument against meat is based on several fallacies. As stated earlier, in the movie we are told a lie about animal fat causing insulin resistance. We are also told animal fat coats red blood cells, which is a physiological impossibility. We are then treated to some of the horrors that occur within meat production by the food industrial complex, the negative feelings of which the viewer naturally ties to the made-up pathophysiology associated with meat-eating.

Anyone with a conscience will feel terrible for the animals and be sickened by the deplorable environments in which they are raised; but what does this have to do with the actual of consumption of animal protein? It is disingenuous to equate meat that is raised ethically and healthy with the Franken-meat created by the food industrial complex. Animals have been consumed for millennia with no untoward effects, and we now have easy access to grass-fed beef and other organic foods, even at discount food stores.

My suggestion is to watch "Food, Inc." instead of "What the Health?" if you want to gain insight into the nasty world of the food industrial complex. "Food, Inc." is accurate and free of radical vegan propaganda.

The Paleodiet Is a "Meat-Based" Diet

At one point in the movie, Dr. Klapper trashes the Paleodiet because it is supposedly all about meat. This is an excellent example of the radical thinking in "What the Health?

In its common use, the Paleodiet refers to the way humans ate before the advent of our modern agribusiness. Up in the Arctic Circle, the Paleodiet would be fatty meats. In the Pacific Islands, the Paleodiet would be vegetables, fruit and fish. In the nearby Solomon Sea, the Kitavans get most of their calories from sweet potatoes, yams and taro root, as well as tropical fruit. They also eat fish, but no red meat at all. The Kitavan diet is also considered Paleo.

The Kempner Rice Diet

The movie ends with an explanation of the Kempner rice diet, with which Dr. Kempner reversed hypertension in many patients by having them eat rice, sugar, fruit and fruit juice. This is used as evidence in the movie that eating these calories has no physiologic harm and is, in fact, healthy.

Missing in the analysis of Kempner's work is that most patients lost weight simply because they chose to eat less, which is a stereotypical mental default people assume when going on any diet. Kempner's

diet was also free of sodium, which has been consumed in excess amounts for generations in America and should be drastically reduced.

The proper analysis of the Kempner program is that in the short term, substantial calorie reduction, no matter the calories consumed, can have positive physiological effects. If you want, you can lose weight by just eating Twinkies. I met a DC who reversed his type 2 diabetes in about one month by eating only 600 calories per day, 450 of which were courtesy of a double cheeseburger at MacDonald's.

I did a YouTube video that describes the Twinkie and cheeseburger stories, and emphasizes that calories absolutely matter and should be counted if you are trying to shred pounds.[2] In the long-term it is probably not a good idea to make Twinkies or cheeseburgers your only calorie source.

But the biggest problem for the radical vegans when it comes to the Kempner program is that they make it sound like you can just "live it up on sugar" as long as no meat is on the table. It turns out Dr. Kempner had to get many patients to eat more because they lost so much weight. Other scientists who worked with the rice diet have described it as a semi-starvation diet.[3]

Another nail in the coffin for the vegans is that after patients got their BP down to an acceptable level, the following foods were added back into the diet: small amounts of non-leguminous vegetables, potatoes, lean meat or fish (all prepared without salt or fat).[4] In the movie, they obviously left out the meat and fish part of the Kempner story because it conflicts with their dogma.

I could go on with other problems in this movie, but space is limited. "Eat more vegetables" should have been the message in the movie, along with minimizing refined sugar, flour, oils and excess salt.

References

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OCTOBER 2017