Food Is Dangerous Until You Prove It Isn't

By Hank Campbell — February 3, 2016

In the modern cultural climate, where the belief is you are what you eat, sometimes you can become convinced you get what you don't pay for [1] -- and then sometimes you just go ahead and pay for self-identification.

If only there existed a large body of experts that acted in the interests of the public.

There are, in groups like the American Council on Science and Health, Genetic Literacy Project [2], Council for Agricultural Science and Technology [3], and others.

You won't find those in pop culture nutritional punditry, though. Instead, Michael Pollan, Marion Nestle, Dr. Oz and Union of Concerned Scientists embrace miracle food fads and scaremonger regular agriculture that people who are not wealthy elites can afford.

The newest nutritional guidelines were released earlier last month [4] and some people thought we were mean in our articles discussing the evidence basis of some of the recommendations. Well, there was little evidence, though I was relieved there was any evidence at all. They still remained confusing. No one in science thinks eggs are bad for us, so why do nutritionists on panels for the government suggest if you consume more than the cholesterol equivalent to one egg a day, your arteries will seize up?

It's simply good food/bad food mythology, a relic of 1990s thinking and just as outdated as a Zip Drive in 2015. Mythology remains the operative word. Marion Nestle wrote a whole book [5] claiming soda was bad food, while insisting if you eat no GMOs you will be healthier -- so organic is good food.

What was her evidence? The same rubbish we have been told was science for the last 35 years, observational "studies" consisting of asking people to remember what they ate and then finding what health outcomes have a similar curve. Then someone writes a book about the newest trend.

Decades ago, we at the American Council said that demonizing saturated fats was silly. Regardless, government said those were bad and that, you guessed it, trans fats in margarine were healthier than butter.
They weren't right, and that is something we can show.

What has happened since 1980, when people started following government nutritional guidelines and so nutritionists started embracing their flawed methodology with confirmation bias akin to religion? Obesity has skyrocketed. We went low-fat when we were told the experts said we must, we went sugar-free when we were told, Americans overwhelmingly accepted nutrition as a science, and it has been a disaster.

Now the newest guidelines basically say we need to eat a Mediterranean diet -- another fad. Ironically, Boston Globe quotes Walter Willett, chair of the department of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health as saying, There are very clear scientific conclusions about red meat and soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages that were basically absent from the final Dietary Guidelines.

That's absolutely not true, but it's why the Harvard T.C. Chan School of Public Health is regarded by the evidence-based nutrition community as more like a branch of Natural Resources Defense Council than a scientific body. They do no research beyond asking people to keep diaries and then seeing who gets obese. When it comes to "conclusions" they invoke other bodies which did flawed meta-analyses, like the International Agency for Research on Cancer, United Nations panels that hand-select scholars and make determinations like that sausage is as carcinogenic as cigarettes and mustard gas.

Somewhere, someone is claiming all modern food must be proven safe -- which can't happen. If they read about it on a website promoting fear and doubt about food, they are willing to believe it. In reality, outside the distrust of science that many nutritionists with their conflicting, simplistic statements have promoted, our science-based food supply is not dangerous; not GMOs, not tilling, not pesticides and fertilizers. Eggs are safe, no matter how much unwilling entrenched nutritionists want to deny it.

Now, Chipotle burritos ... well, you are on your own there, no matter what the government says.
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