

# IT ALL STARTS WITH DIET

## FEDERAL 'GUIDELINES' ARE TOO FATTY

by T. Colin Campbell and Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr.

(Reprinted with permission and gratitude from *EarthSave News*, June 2009)

As scientific researchers who have spent our careers establishing the link between diet and disease, we find President



Obama's directive on "restoring scientific integrity to government decision-making" very welcome news.

We hope this will lead to health care policy that is informed by America's

most ignored scientific fact on health: that a whole-foods plant-based diet can prevent and in many cases reverse heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases.

Today's health care debate has very little to do with what makes us sick. It is centered almost entirely on who gets covered and who pays. Extending coverage to more people is a good thing. But Americans who already are covered are suffering rising rates of chronic disease. Lack of coverage is not causing their disease, and expanding coverage won't cure these diseases in others. We have to do more than increase coverage.

The No. 1 cause and cure of America's health care crisis is right under your nose - it's what you put in your mouth.

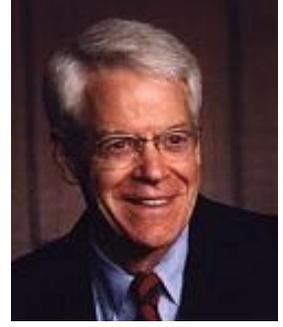
Unfortunately, the scientific findings on diet and disease are marginalized by the political power of huge, mutually reinforcing commercial interests - meat, dairy, sugar, drugs and surgery.

These industries are desperate to sell a solution that obscures their part in the problem. If they can convince people that

the cause of our health crisis has nothing to do with eating unhealthy food, and everything to do with increasing access to drugs and surgery, Americans will spend trillions more on health care without improving their health. That's what happens when you leave science out of public policy.

If President Obama wants Americans to get the full benefit of scientific research on health, then he should add three measures to his health reforms.

- **One:** Change the way government develops its dietary guidelines. Right now, the U.S. government's most widely publicized dietary recommendations are deadly. The Food and Nutrition Board's 2002 report says that to reduce degenerative diseases like



***The No. 1 cause and cure of America's health care crisis is right under your nose - it's what you put in your mouth.***

heart disease and cancer, we can consume up to 35 percent of our calories as fat, up to 35 percent of our calories as protein and up to 25 percent of calories as added sugars.

Here is a daily diet that meets those nutrition guidelines: Breakfast: 1 cup Fruit Loops; 1 cup skim milk; 1 package M&M milk chocolate candies; fiber and vitamin supplements. Lunch: Grilled cheddar cheeseburger. Dinner: 3 slices pepperoni pizza, with a 16-ounce soda and 1 serving Archway sugar cookies.

This helps explain why 12-year-old schoolchildren develop thickening of their carotid arteries to the brain, and 80 percent of 20-year-old soldiers, dying in combat, are found to have coronary artery heart disease.

How could the government distribute this information and call it science? Members of the committee had financial ties to industries that benefit from higher protein and sugar allowances, and the panel was partly funded by corporate money.

The Obama administration should establish a rule: No scientist with financial ties to the food and drug industries should chair - or choose the members of - panels that set dietary guidelines.

- **Two:** President Obama should establish a new institute at the National In-

stitutes of Health dedicated exclusively to exploring the link between diet, health and disease. Today, there are 27 institutes and centers at the National Institutes of Health, but none devoted to nutrition, despite the great public interest in the subject. For the sake of the people who pay the bills, it's time for NIH to dedicate an institute to studying the effect of nutrition on health.

- **Three:** Congress should require that medical schools - as a condition of receiving federal grants - offer residency programs on dietary approaches to preventing and treating disease. Americans don't understand the disease-fighting power of a good diet because their doctors don't. Medical schools teach a drug-centered curriculum. They do not learn about the many population-based studies that show the connection between diet and disease. They do not review the biochemical studies on disease formation that support the population-based studies. And they do not study the results found in treating disease with diet in clinical settings. Drugs and surgery can offer miraculous benefits in certain cases. But it's unconscionable for doctors not to know about - or tell their patients about - the preventive and healing power of food.

These three proposals won't cost much, and they will pay back our investment a million-fold by making people healthier

*No scientist with financial ties to the food and drug industries should chair - or choose the members of - panels that set dietary guidelines.*

and reducing health care costs. Moreover, they reflect a commitment - expressed by the White House last week - to finally let the public enjoy the health benefits of scientific research.

*T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D., is professor emeritus of nutritional biochemistry at Cornell University. He is co-author of [The China Study](#).*

*Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr., M.D., former president of the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons, is a preventive medicine consultant at the Cleveland Clinic. He is the author of [Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease](#).*