

Your Patients Are Malnourished...And So Are You

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It's easy to be deceived into thinking that we are getting all the nutrients we need. Never mind all the labels that say "Fortified" with this and that, or the synthetic vitamins that make you think that 1000% of an isolate is healthy. There are also many people, possibly including yourself, who are trying to make good food choices, and yet we are all struggling with malnutrition. Yes, I said "all." And then you're possibly thinking that you're going to be able to heal your patients with some herbs and needles when they're in this malnourished state? Good luck with that.

One thing that practitioners these days seem to forget is that traditional Chinese medicine was developed during a time when nutrition, and what we ate, were wildly different from now. For example, in traditional cultures, when people ate meat, they didn't eat the muscle and throw out the organs, which are the most nutrient-dense food of all (much more so than vegetables) — they ate EVERY BIT and didn't waste any part of the animal. They ate insects, which are high in fat and protein. Their vegetables were grown without pesticides and in rich soil. They ate seasonally (unlike us, who eat fruit all year, for example), and didn't abuse carbs. They didn't do crazy things like eat low-fat, or take their cows off of grass and feed them corn. And I guarantee you that no one was making a separate meal of macaroni and cheese for a picky child. We all learned nutrition in acupuncture school, but you really can't apply it to modern American culture because nothing at all is the same.

Even if you're including vegetables and/or fruits as a large portion of your meals, how do you know you're actually getting vitamins and minerals from them? Just because it looks like spinach doesn't mean you're getting it's full nutritional value — it's estimated that it takes 80 cups of spinach grown today to equal 1 cup grown 50 years ago. A Rutgers University study showed that it takes 19 ears of corn to have the same nutritional value of 1 ear of corn grown in 1940. This recent article in [Scientific American](#)¹ points to multiple studies that have shown the same results.

But I'm eating organically! many people may argue. Organically grown fruits and vegetables are definitely more nutrient dense, but they also don't approach their full nutritional value, especially if they're not locally grown. The vitamin C in broccoli breaks down a week after it's picked, and it's a pretty good assumption that the organic broccoli in your local health food store, unless it was picked locally, is older than 1 week. And all those antioxidants those fruits and vegetables supposedly have? Those form in the final days when ripening occurs. But to have it be ripe in the stores, it has to be picked early, so you lose out on getting most of those nutrients. And so we start out with a mineral and trace mineral deficiency, and an antioxidant deficiency and that's assuming people are eating plenty of veggies. Which, of course, they're not.

We tend to look at the overload of carbohydrates that people are eating and think that all it's doing is causing obesity and diabetes, but high carb intake causes nutritional deficiencies as well. Vitamin B's are depleted, as well as zinc, magnesium, and chromium. And the average person eats approximately 5-10 times the amount of carbohydrates their body can handle, and that includes the

people eating "healthy" carbs, like whole grains. Vitamin B deficiency symptoms run the gamut, from blood sugar issues, to an inability to handle stress, to anxiety and depression. Sounds like everyone's got vitamin B deficiency, and yes, they probably do. And stress depletes vitamin B. Do you know what the most nutrient-dense food form of B is? Liver. But who's eating that nowadays?

Magnesium and zinc are involved in literally hundreds of enzyme reactions — if a person is deficient, it stands to reason that many small reactions don't occur, and that ultimately this contributes to the epidemic of degenerative diseases we see nowadays. Malnutrition = disease. Ever wonder why it seems so rare that someone dies peacefully, at home, in their sleep these days? A lot of that has to do with the huge rise in degenerative diseases, which often come from the deficiencies of so many nutrients — and not just the ones in vegetables.

Vitamin D, for example. We used to get vitamin D from our foods (butter, eggs, lard, liver) as well as from the sun, but then the U.S. started this low-fat craze and people started being deficient in the fat-soluble vitamins, of which D is one. Vitamin D is vital for immune function, prevention of cancers, prevention of cataracts, bone health, prevention of kidney stones, prevention of depression, prevention of calcification of the arteries. And official estimates say that 85% of Americans are clinically deficient, and from what we see in our clinic, it's even higher. Then there's K2, which works synergistically with D. It's present in fermented foods — real fermented foods, not what we buy in supermarkets today. K2 is starting to be considered possibly even more important than D — one of its main benefits is for osteoporosis, and getting calcium to where it should be and isn't, and removing calcium from places it shouldn't be (arteries, for example, or in joints where it causes bone spurs). It used to be found in butter from cows eating grass but, oh right — cows are often fed corn now. It's also found eggs and full-fat cheeses, both of which people limit for no good reason.

Which brings me to Omega-3 fatty acids. Did you know that we used to get Omega 3's in the meat from grass-fed cows? We didn't need much, not like today. Today we need so much more and why is that? Because Omega-3's are supposed to be in a ratio of 1:2 or 1:4 with Omega 6's. But people eat too many processed plant oils (corn, vegetable, soy, canola and safflower), which skew our ratios to around 1:25. And why is this a problem? Because Omega-6's are very, very inflammatory in those amounts, and not only contribute to inflammation in the body which then causes heart disease, but they are also instrumental in creating oxidized cholesterol (LDL), which in turn, makes plaques. Just cutting out those processed plant oils would reduce your inflammation dramatically. For more info on fats, read my article [Big Fat Lies](#).

Iodine is another big deficiency. Iodized salt was created to prevent goiters — the problem is, that's not enough for optimal health. Milk and bread used to be fortified with iodine, but that was discontinued in the 1980's. Iodine is vital for thyroid health (lack of which is certainly rampant these days) as well as breast and prostate health, and is key in regulating hormones for fetal and infant brain development. Iodine deficiency is considered the leading cause of intellectual deficiency.²

The intake of non-fermented soy, like soy milk and tofu, contributes to nutritional deficiencies in that soy actually prevents the digestion of multiple nutrients, like calcium, magnesium, zinc, iron and copper, not to mention that it also contributes to hypothyroidism and digestive problems. Read more in the article [Bamboozled By The Soy Hype](#).

Let's talk about processed food for a moment. It's relatively easy to look at a Twinkie and know that it's not real food, but have you considered low-fat or skim milk in the same way? Did it come out of the cow that way? No, it didn't, and when they take the fat out, it makes the milk an odd color, so

they have to add powdered milk back in to make it white. That powdered milk contains oxidized cholesterol, which, as I just said above, contributes to plaques. Never mind high fructose corn syrup (don't ever fall for the marketing that says it's just like sugar — it's not) that's in so many processed foods — have you considered that agave nectar is also processed? The root itself is not very sweet on it's own, so it's boiled down or concentrated with enzymes until it, too, is a very high fructose product. Just because it's sold in a health food store doesn't mean it's healthy — they sell cookies there too. Processed food is hidden everywhere and it takes looking around with open and critical eyes to start to see it.

I'm not saying you should be churning your own butter. But you might want to take a good look at exactly how far away your food is from its original source, and how many ingredients are in it. We tend to think that how we've been eating the last 40 or 50 years is how we've always been eating, and that this new, modern way of eating is the healthier way to eat. But consider this: we have more heart disease than we ever have before. Cancer rates consistently increase. It's the exception, not the rule, when someone dies at home, and the nursing homes are filled with the long, slow decline of degenerative diseases. For the first time, the average life span has stopped rising, and has, in fact, fallen. The University of Virginia did a longevity study that showed that if you made it to the age of 50 in the 1700's, your odds of living to 100 years old was three times greater than it was in the year 2000.

And getting your patients healthier will require them to actually have an abundant amount of nutrition to get them out of the poor-health hole that they are in. Eating "well" (or however they describe it) may only mean that they don't slide further down into the hole, rather than actually giving them enough nutrients to heal.

So what do you do? Get to know where your food is from, and how processed it is. Find or make alternatives if you have to. Buy from farmers markets if you can, or buy organic if that's not available. Avoid processed vegetable oils like the plague. Buy natural meat, not the regular meat from conventional feedlots, with it's hormones and antibiotics. Eat full fat everything. Consider taking supplements that are food-based and not synthetic, so you don't deplete your system more (read more about the difference in the article [Holistic Nutrition](#)). Read and educate yourself as much as you can — email me if you want some places to start. And start to question the conventional thinking about food — the more practiced you get with thinking critically (about anything!), the more informed you will become.

References

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