

Obesity—What we are doing isn't working! What can we blame?

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The following paragraph is taken from a recent 'Team Nutrition' pamphlet from the US Department of Agriculture:

"The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is doing what it can to help. The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs must be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. USDA's Team Nutrition Initiative provides nutrition education materials to help schools meet these standards."

President Bush urged all school districts to develop a plan for combating childhood obesity and to have this plan ready for school year 2006. The problem of childhood obesity has been growing for years and has not responded to previous attempts to control this urgent problem. It has finally become severe enough to demand presidential attention to validate that this is indeed a national problem and needs immediate attention.

Belief systems are hard to change. When I found that what I thought was true was really untrue and the cause of so many health problems, I felt compelled to tell others what I learned.

The "Nutritional Guidelines for Americans 2005" were brought out with much fanfare by Tommy

Thompson, who was then the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). He talked about the 13 nutritional experts who consulted together, heard other testimony from interested citizens, and made their recommendation to the USDA. Who these groups or individuals in the USDA were was "not available." "Whoever-it-was" got this information into a final form for HHS to present to our nation.

My beliefs began to be weakened when I found that these experts had not documented the information they compiled, had not documented the testimony that they heard, and had turned over whatever information they had to the USDA to compile. This department had been putting out the guidelines about every 5 years since the first one in 1980.

My belief system took another hit when I went back to read the previous guidelines, and found that the format and information had changed minimally, and the nutritional errors in these guidelines had persisted for the last 25 years. These errors have become institutionalized in the USDA, which, by controlling funding, has forced the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)—who controls funding for school lunches—to conform to nutritional regulations that are detrimental to children's health.

It is hard (impossible) for me to believe that there has been a serious effort from USDA to develop and

update good nutritional guidelines. A whole new science of glycobiology, the concept of metabolic syndrome, and the concept of cellular nutrition have all been ignored in a nutritional document that impacts the health of our entire nation. Thousands of articles available about new nutritional science are easily available on the Internet. This new nutritional science information has been completely ignored. The USDA only validates the various food pyramids as nutritional tools.

The new 'individualized' pyramid Web site only further obscures the inadequacy of the pyramid. The guidelines do not distinguish between low and high glycemic carbohydrates and seem to be unaware of the relationship between high glycemic foods and insulin resistance. The guidelines continue to limit saturated fats in school lunches to 10%. They emphasize increased use of vegetable oils and ignore the known danger of an imbalance of the omega 3 and omega 6 unsaturated fats. Good saturated fats are essential for cell wall integrity. Excess and unbalanced unsaturated fats are unhealthy and associated with cancer (and other chronic diseases) because of their oxidation and the free radicals produced when they are oxidized in the body.

The nutritional guidelines do not mention the deterioration of our food supply or our processed food contamination with excito-toxins.

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These are chemicals that mimic some natural neurotransmitters in our body and can stimulate cells that have these transmitters to death. They also stimulate our pancreas to make insulin, contributing to insulin resistance and the diseases of the metabolic syndrome. The food industry uses these chemicals as taste enhancers and artificial sweeteners.

The President has urged school districts to develop a plan to fight obesity in our schools and commu-

nities. There have been untold hours and resources contributed by sincere individuals into this effort. The DPI, however, demands that the failed nutritional food guidelines be followed. These guidelines have been developed to placate political and corporate interests, not individual, school, or national health objectives. The guidelines obviously have not done the job in the past, and we should not be forced to use this tool to reach our health objectives in the future.

It is unconscionable for the DPI to instruct the district schools to fight this war on obesity with information and tools that are 30 years old. The DPI is responsible for validating the information that they foist on Wisconsin school districts. They have uncritically accepted information that is dated and a product of agricultural politics and corporate greed.

In Wisconsin, we can do better than that!

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