



Nutritional Medicine and Diet Care

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A number of previously well-established fundamentals to nutritional health have been challenged in recent times. The merits of the well balanced low fat diet, built on whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and grains with restricted use of meats and dairy is now being vigorously debated by those advocating various alternatives including; the no grain Paleolithic diet or the high meat protein Atkins diet, or the high fat (low omega-3) Weston Price diet. The rationale behind each of these 'alternative' dietary regimens is flexible though improvements in lean body weight seems to be the primary practical motivation for adherents of the Paleolithic and Atkins diets, while Weston Price (a dentist) advocates the high fat diets for its unsubstantiated benefits to dental health. The confusion by both the public and nutrition professional alike over the merits of these diets, and various versions of them, derives at least in part from an inappropriate equating of lean body mass (i.e. BMI) with actual health (i.e. biochemical health). A high fat, high protein diet of eggs and fried chicken can reduce body weight, but unfortunately it will also increase your risk of metabolic disease and create a biochemical environment conducive to increased inflammation and oxidative

damage. Over time this accelerates degenerative tissue damage and the aging process. Though more extreme dietary variations can be used to improve client outcomes in the shorter term (such as weight loss) it is essential that the public message of health not be confused. The body's nutritional needs have not changed in thousands of years. We still require fuel for energy; best achieved by carbohydrates then fats; proteins for building the body's tissues; specialised components like vitamins and minerals for ensuring enzyme function etc; essential fatty acids (such as omega-3, 6) for cell membrane fluidity and inflammatory modulation; carotenoids and flavonoids as modifiers of oxidative and inflammatory activity; fibre as bulking agents and substrates for bacteria in a healthy gut; and plenty of fluid, (i.e. water) to maintain the bodies hydration state. Dis-ease will occur if any of these essential components are missing for any length of time. It is therefore essential that if the public is to remain engaged in positively managing their health, professional advice must at least ensure that the regimen provides an adequate supply of all the essentials. This we should all agree on.