

THE NEXT BIG THING

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Abstract (Document Summary)

A roundtable discussion on dieting, nutrition, and health by several nutrition experts is presented. Larry Krug, co-founder of eatwize.com and diet coach on VH1's From Flab to Fab, laments on the low-carb movement as represented by Atkins and South Beach diet that these approaches are flawed in many ways.

Full Text (1688 words)

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[Headnote]

A custom diet based on your own DNA? Organic foods becoming a catchphrase like low-carb? A roundtable of nutrition experts offers food for thought on what the next big nutrition craze might be - and on what it should be

* M&F: Is the low-carb movement, as represented by Atkins and South Beach, played out? Larry Krug, co-founder of eatwize.com, diet coach on VH1's From Flab to Fab: It's hard to say how long these things will stay around. Atkins is often shunned in the medical and diet communities because they know it's flawed in many ways, but the marketing is so sophisticated that such concerns can be overridden. It could take a decade before people go, "Hold on a second." Subway advertises its low-carb menu, and then people think, "Oh, Subway is good." Uh, no.

Jeff Feliciano, director of research and quality assurance, Weider Global Nutrition: I think the diet still has legs going forward. It may be waning as far as supplements go, but the big companies that have had R&D [research and development] on the low-carb side are finally coming to market with stuff that's really pretty decent, actually. Plus, plenty of positive research supports, at the very least, low sugar [intake].

Jonny Bowden, CN, CNS, author of the best seller *Living the Low Carb Life* (Sterling Publishing, 2004), weightloss expert on iVillage.com: I imagine there's going to be some backlash at some point against low-carb, but it isn't going away. Reports of its death have been greatly exaggerated.

* M&F: Why must there be a backlash?

Bowden: The low-carb industry shot itself in the foot by sending the message that you can eat whatever you want as long as it's low in carbs. Why? Because Americans want one-sentence answers to complex issues. We took away from this whole low-carb [movement] the idea that if things are low in carbs, we can eat anything we want. Oh, I thought you could eat two hamburgers and 10 slices of bacon and four chickens a day as long as they're low in carbs. Not!

It's the same mistake we made with low-fat. So now you've got somewhere around 1,800 [low-carb] products on the market, including dozens of junk foods. In L.A. we have low-carb water, for God's sake, and I'm not making this up. So people are now filling up on these junk-food products, thinking they're watching their carbs. And guess what. They're not going to lose weight, and the backlash is going to be, "see, low-carb doesn't work." And the entire industry of bread companies and pasta companies and Krispy Kremes - who are hurting now - are just waiting to point their finger and say, "see, we told you. It doesn't work."

In fact, it does work wonderfully when it's done properly. But it's been corrupted by and contaminated with the rush to market of all of this low-carb junk food.

Mauro Di Pasquale, MD, world-renowned nutrition and sports medicine expert, author of *The Metabolic Diet*. The basic issues the low-carb diet has brought out will remain important, such as people consuming too many refined carbs and increasing insulin levels rather dramatically. I don't think we're ever going back to the pre-low-carb phase. But people will realize that maybe this isn't the only diet, that maybe the best one for that individual is a little different in macronutrient content, while still keeping in mind the health benefits of decreasing refined sugars and carbs.

* M&F: If you assume there is some sort of backlash afoot, what trend might fill the void?

Christopher R. Mohr, MS, RD, LDN, a doctoral candidate in exercise physiology at the University of Pittsburgh: Well, we demonized fat in the early 1990's and carbs in the early 2000's, so I guess protein is up next, but I don't think we're ever going to get rid of that, so it's hard to say what the next fad will be. I hope there isn't one and that people go more toward moderation. I'd like to see more of a Mediterranean-type approach with more balance among all macronutrients, concentrating more on the types of macronutrients rather than eliminating one or the other.

Di Pasquale: The phase-shift-type diet I've espoused for the past decade is probably

what's going to happen, because it's got so many advantages over a strict low-carb diet. In it there's a certain amount of low-carb, then higher carb/lower fat, so you're maximizing the response to the various hormones, including insulin. The low-carb diets have reduced the insulin response, but remember, insulin is a very anabolic hormone.

* M&F: What else is on the horizon that most people haven't yet perceived as approaching us?

Krug: That's tricky: What's the next iPod for the diet industry? No one knows for sure, but I really think that people going organic could be the next big thing. You see the traffic going through these Whole Foods markets in L.A., and they keep opening more of them. At this point, people are getting a little suspect of the meat industry and the pesticides and all of that.

* M&F: That's one pin head on a huge map, Larry. What about Detroit or Houston? Better yet, what about Main Street, USA?

Krug: I don't know how it is in the Mid-west. There probably aren't too many Whole Foods [markets] in small towns. But there is more awareness, and people could start going more organic. I think it could happen.

Bowden: It's happening in niches. People are beginning to understand that their food is contaminated. We're now getting government PCB warnings about eating salmon - the one food that every nutritionist from across the spectrum recommends! Eating pure foods is at least as important as how much fat vs. protein vs. carbohydrates a food contains. These factory farms are not only disgusting from a humanitarian point of view but also from a health point of view, given the antibiotics that have to be fed to these animals to prevent them from being sick in these horrible conditions and the steroids needed for them to come to market fat. People eventually need to get a wake-up call to that.

I believe very strongly in [learning] about food's hormonal effect, its impact on insulin and glucagon and what those hormones do to weight and diabetes risk. However, that said, if you gave me a choice between a low-carb diet of junk food and a moderately high-carb diet of organic food high in fiber, I'd take the latter in a heartbeat. The quality of food has got to matter at least as much as the proportions.

* M&F: What do you see on the near horizon, Jeff?

Feliciano: The time is fast approaching when people will have to pay much greater attention to the health of their gums, sinuses and guts as they age, because of the increased exposure of those tissues to chemical and pathological insults. They are chronically infected now. The immune system is always "spinning," so it's very difficult to play catch-up ball. A whole list of negative health effects is now being seen clearly as a function of sinus infections, gum compromise, chronic tonsillitis and gastrointestinal distress. At this level of pollution in food, air and water and at this level of daily stress, a need exists for something more along the lines of a prophylactic antibiotic as well as

greater nutritional support.

* M&F: How could a diet help protect these "first line of defense" tissues and increase one's ability to defend them from illness and disease? And what kind of nutritional antidotes offer mainstream potential?

Feliciano: Good daily hygiene for sinuses and gums is something people can control, but gut health is a little different. You have to make sure you're getting enough fiber, but other weapons include probiotics and immunoglobulin G [IGG], an isolate from the serum of cattle. It shows great promise in having very significant protection effects across a whole spectrum, including gut health. Various supplement companies offer IGG products. Every year there seem to be more implications for its use.

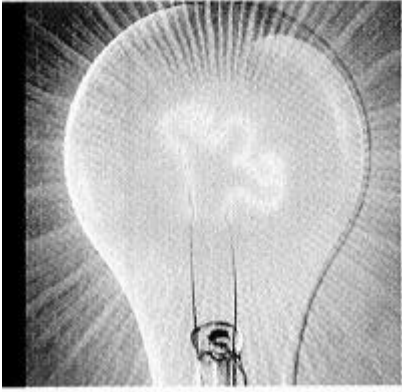
* M&F: Taking a longer-term, more macro approach, what's the next big thing?

Bowden: The biggest trend we're going to see in the next decade is genetic testing - the specific targeting of genes, hormones and enzymes involved in fat storage and fat loss - and the scramble by the drug companies to target these things. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to observe that some pharmaceuticals work for some people and don't for others.

The exact same thing is true with weight loss. We'll begin to see that there are different metabolic types. Obviously people respond in different ways to macronutrient distributions, just like people respond individually to antidepressants and everything else. The next big thing, if there is one, is understanding that you can't necessarily follow a specific diet right out of the box. You've got to modify it so it works for you.

Di Pasquale: My Metabolic Diet begins from two different positions: You can start it off low-carb or moderate-carb, and then you figure out your best macronutrient mix. It's a diet of discovery, really. What I'm trying to do now is get some parameters, both urine- and blood-based, that will give people an idea of where they should start, diet-wise, with respect to how easily they use fat, for example, as opposed to perhaps using more carbs because of how their metabolic systems work.

The ultimate way will be using the new nutra-genomics, where you're testing a large number of genes and the interactions of these genes with nutrients. At that point, you'll get the diet that's basically made for the person's genetic makeup. That's coming within the next 10 years.



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