

## June 2017 Newsletter



Wondering what to do with your eggplant? Mea Hassell's recent cooking class at The Market of Choice teaching kitchen featured Moussaka Mea (page 195 of Good Food, Great Medicine, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition). The class was for participants in the One Year Health Transformation Plan, an intensive health restoration program designed for people who commit to a year of lifestyle change to transform their health for the long term.

## Surviving cancer: food and lifestyle choices after cancer diagnosis are as important as treatment decisions such as radiation and chemotherapy

A diagnosis of cancer is generally a life-changing event accompanied by a tsunami of information and choices and doctors and therapists and clinics and images and tests and numbers and a whole new vocabulary. There is so much swirling around in your brain that it's easy to lose sight of the basic lifestyle choices that can improve quality of life and reduce side effects of treatment: good food and exercise.

When dealing with reduced appetite, nausea, chemo brain, and overwhelming fatigue, it's *waay* too easy to turn to the comfort and convenience of refined carbohydrates. However, it has never been more important to make sure what we *do* eat is high-quality whole food, especially if we can only eat very little. Extra calories may be necessary, but empty calories such as sugar and refined grains should be avoided. We need plenty of protein and good fat to help support our immune system and maintain muscle mass. People who eat whole foods and stay active throughout treatment report fewer side effects (and bounce back sooner) than others who don't use lifestyle medicine to the same degree.

## How much do lifestyle choices matter?

A lot! According to the observational data available so far, the degree of benefit appears to be in the same range as chemotherapy and radiation. For example:

- **Eating a whole food diet** – the omnivorous Mediterranean pattern has the most supportive data – is associated with less side effects and fatigue and improved survival. In a recent study, *risk of dying after the diagnosis of colon cancer was 40-50% less!*<sup>1</sup> (This degree of benefit has been noted in multiple prior studies, also.)
- **Reducing sugars and other rapidly-metabolized simple carbohydrates** targets several cancer-relevant pathways, including insulin resistance, waistline, insulin levels, and overall dietary nutrient density.
- **Waist management** is vital. In young women with breast cancer, for example, obesity can almost double the risk of dying from the cancer. Healthy weight loss (where appropriate) should be incorporated into any cancer patient's survivorship program.
- **Eating nuts daily** is associated with significantly lowering all-cause mortality in colon cancer patients. Whole grains, oil seeds like pumpkin, sunflower, and flaxseeds, and extra-virgin olive oil are other foods that appear to have significant benefit.
- **Moderate alcohol consumption** (up to 7 drinks per week) is associated with *better* overall survival.<sup>2</sup>
- **Getting adequate sleep** may improve cancer survival based on what is known about how sleep impacts immunity and inflammation. Scheduling more sleep while minimizing sleep aids should be part of any plan.
- **Physical activity is a potent survival agent.** A high level of physical activity is associated with *20-30% lower risk of dying* from any cause.<sup>3</sup> When going through cancer therapy, getting exercise can be challenging, yet moderate activity can lessen fatigue and improve energy levels. But what do you do when the last thing you can imagine doing is exercise? Maybe start with tiny doses: a 5-minute walk, or doing a few leg lifts, or using an exercise band – or simply being mindful to keep as active as your energy level allows. Some people are even able to maintain their regular exercise routines; everyone is different.

<sup>1</sup> Van Blarigan, E. et al. J Clin Oncol 2017;35:Suppl abstr 10006

<sup>2</sup> Van Blarigan; Newcomb, P. et al. J Clin Oncol 2013;31:1939-46

<sup>3</sup> Brenner, D. et al. Cancer Causes Control 2016;27:459-72

▪ **Nutritional supplements** have a real, but very limited role. For suggestions as to evaluating claims and applying vigorous critical thinking, see *Nutritional Supplements* on page 58 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*.

### The individual factor

Each person has unique issues related to the type and stage of their tumor, treatment received, and individual health factors. There is usually an additional role in each case for specific foods, supplements, and other interventions to help cope with side effects of therapy and other health issues. With the upheaval that a cancer diagnosis and treatment forces upon us, the help of friends and family providing good food, support, advocacy, along with liberal doses of humor and optimism, can make all the difference.

### Getting started on your anti-cancer journey? Here are ways we can help.

- **Download** our *Cancer Prevention and Survivorship* handout: [goodfoodgreatmedicine.com](http://goodfoodgreatmedicine.com) (resources tab)
- **Read** the first 126 pages of *Good Food, Great Medicine* for foundational lifestyle and food recommendations.
- **Schedule** a consultation with Dr. Hassell to help develop your own evidence-based cancer survivorship plan with optimal lifestyle choices to minimize treatment side effects and reduce long-term risk of recurrence.
- **Register** for the 2-part *Good Food, Great Medicine* class series in July! (See details further on.) This *Weight Loss, Diabetes Reversal, and Inflammation Reduction* class covers the essentials of a whole food Mediterranean-style diet, tips for integrating physical activity every day, and evidence-based critical thinking necessary to cut through information overload.
- **Enroll** in our one-year health transformation plan, an intensive program for those with multiple health issues. For the cancer patient this can include practical aspects such as helping communicate with your cancer care team, exploring innovative strategies to reduce side effects of treatment, examining “alternative” therapies, helping with weight management (loss or gain), as well as reducing long-term overall risk.

**Want some *real* news? Keep up with Dr. Hassell’s Real Medicine posts!** Follow us on [Facebook](#)! Track us on [Twitter](#)! Browse our [blog](#)!

## Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part classes

### This two-part class series targets weight loss, diabetes reversal, and inflammation reduction.

The classes are based on *Good Food, Great Medicine*, which each participant will receive at the first class.

#### Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 1):

- Review inter-relationship of excess waistline and weight, insulin resistance (common to most cases of type 2 diabetes), and common chronic diseases.
- Discuss the role of the “key four” – a whole food Mediterranean diet; minimal sweeteners, refined grains and starches; daily activity; and enough sleep.
- Work through the 14 simple steps that target your risk factors and produce effective, lasting change in your waistline, blood sugar, and other health risks.

#### Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 2):

- Explore practical application of whole food choices and menu planning. See demonstrations of a couple of foundational recipes from *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Review progress, find solutions to challenges, and fine-tune personal action plans.

*“I’ve bounced around for decades trying to find an eating style that is sustainable. I’m very susceptible to simple carbs and will spiral into heroin-strength addiction. I want to function without being hungry [and] adherence to the Mediterranean diet works best... your approach is common sense AND evidence-based! Bravo!”* Joan B, MD/MSPH

**Time:** 6 – 8 pm Wednesday  
**Dates:** 7/19/2017 (Part 1) and 7/26/2017 (Part 2)  
**Location:** Providence St. Vincent Medical Center  
**Cost:** \$100 (2-class series)  
**Registration:** Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a place

### Dr. Hassell’s speaking events

**6/12/2017 National University of Natural Medicine Grand Rounds:** *Friend or Foe? The Role of: Red meat, Dairy, Alcohol, Gluten, and Caffeine for Good Health.* Miles Hassell, MD Portland, OR.

**7/19/2017 & 7/26/2017 – Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part Type 2 Diabetes & Weight Loss Lifestyle Change Class Series:** Portland, OR. For registration information call our office at 503.291.1777.

**\*COMING SOON\* Providence Heart Institute BASECAMP Cardiac Prevention + Wellness 4-part Series:** *Good Food, Great Medicine:* Portland, OR. Call the Providence Resource Line at 503.574.6595 to join the waiting list.

Sign up for this free monthly medical + lifestyle newsletter at [Goodfoodgreatmedicine.com](http://Goodfoodgreatmedicine.com)

*“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”*  
1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)