

Diet and Cancer: Why Leaving the Cows Alone May Be Good Medicine

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Abstract

While compiling the available research on diet and cancer (diet for cancer prevention, dietary links with cancer, diet for post chemo, and the like), I noticed two salient things: there is a plethora of contradictory “medical” advice available, but, the research, when you cut away the outliers, seems to consistently hone in on only a handful of definitives. What comes up in the science-backed studies, time and again is the advice to: 1) Eat whole foods; unprocessed, fresh, local, and unadulterated as possible are beneficial in preventing and healing from cancer (and its treatments). 2) Advising the avoidance of alcohol consumption (and other processed sugar, e.g. white sugar) has now become as mainstream as chemo, but, lastly and most surprisingly, 3) moderate red meat intake and *avoid (cow) milk products?* Although the latter was not unheard of, I hadn’t realized that the pushback on the meat and dairy industries had gotten as bold and brazen as I was finding it to be. It was fairly shocking to see that some US mainstream institutions were now speaking plainly, and quite publicly (if and only if one is looking for the information, though, still), about their scientific findings regarding the detriments of cow dairy product consumption – threat of powerful enemies notwithstanding. The fact that the dairy industry still holds a powerful position in the world of advertising in the U.S. and one still must be looking for the information to glean it (not to mention their atrocious and painful daily abuse of dairy cows) persuaded the focus of this paper.

Keywords: Diet, nutrition therapy, cancer therapy, cancer prevention, whole foods, health, healing, breast cancer, prostate cancer, ovarian cancer, dairy, cow milk, milk and cancer, dairy and cancer.

Diet and Cancer: Why Leaving the Cows Alone May Be Good Medicine

Shannon H. was 22 years old back in 1993. She was a ‘firecracker’ of a horse wrangler and reminded me of Holly Hunter. I worked with her in the mountains of Colorado one Summer. She got engaged and then she was suddenly diagnosed with advanced metastatic cancer. It had apparently started in the breast, spread to the lung, bone, liver, stomach and more places. She was told she had 3 months, at most. Being Shannon, she said, “well, that’s bull ____”, and made an appointment for a second opinion with an oncologist at the Denver University Hospital.

This outside-the-box (at the time) Oncologist told her to immediately stop drinking her customary 12 diet cokes per day, stop the fast food (she lived on Big Macs and vanilla thick shakes), all red meat, and dairy products. He then handed her a book and told her to read it and follow its dietary advice.

The Book: “Recalled by Life”

Dr. Anthony Satillaro, an M.D. and former CEO of the Methodist Hospital of Philadelphia authored this text to chronicle his surprising and unprecedented 10-year remission from “terminal” prostate cancer (1979) that had metastasized to form several lesions on the bone. He, too, was given 2-3 months to live. He picked up a couple of hitchhikers on the way to his Jersey shore vacation home and the 49-year-old Doctor, figuring he had nothing to lose, followed their advice: try their “hippy diet” (Macrobiotic – a whole food, meat-, dairy-, and processed food-free diet). He shocked his friends/fellow doctors when he lived past the 6-month mark and shocked them again when his tests showed he was in complete remission year after year for almost a decade (Satillaro, 1982).

Shannon (gratefully!) read the book. It was Shannon’s doctor’s thought that at almost 30 years doctor Satillaro’s junior, young Shannon might be able to (miraculously) beat her cancer

for good. Looks like he was right. He told her later, after she was in remission a good 10 years, that he'd thought it was better than telling her something his 'limited' education had prepared him to tell her: 3 months to live. Western, like Chinese, like Ayurvedic and any other medical education is limited by the nature of information itself,. Nobody has it all, it seems.

Catching up with Shannon H.

Shannon lived and lived well and when I found her on Facebook in 2008, she had married (someone else), had 4 children, was still running 150 m.p.h., and still taking that 2nd opinion to heart. She hadn't touched a drop of diet coke or a piece of cheese in a few decades.

Why cow meat and dairy?

My training in Traditional Chinese Medicine taught me that cow dairy is on a short list, seen throughout Oriental Medical literature, as a damp/phlegm producing food. It is considered "greasy" food along with deep-fried food. It shows up in just about every chapter on a list of foods to avoid for patterns of disease involving damp/phlegm (Maciocia, 2005 and Yan & Fischer, 1997). Also, of note is the description of "nodules" in Chinese medicine. These are equated with masses and tumors in our Western vernacular and are caused by and consist of Phlegm, considered a pathogenic factor created by an unbalanced interior (body). I can't help but think of what another friend's surgeon said, after her young 34-year-old breasts were removed in 1992. He told us that all the tumors he had removed over the course of his surgical career had one thing in common -- their consistency in the center was identical to "cottage cheese" (Surgeon at St. Joseph's Hospital, personal communication, 1992). I wondered if phlegm = dairy = the reason why my Mother and other singers I met at music school all avoided eating and drinking dairy products before a performance. I also wondered what cow meat and

dairy had in common – could it be that enormous animals had inherently too many hormones for much smaller humans to digest?

Dr. Plant.

At least one scientist thought similarly about hormones, too. UK based Dr. Jane Plant and her husband, Peter, a geochemist and geologist, worked in China on environmental issues for many years during the 1980s. When she was diagnosed for the fifth time with breast cancer, and given a terminal sentence, in 1993, she and her husband remembered that Chinese women had shockingly low rates of breast cancer – one large epidemiological study from the late seventies showed that only 1 in 100,000 women living in China contracted the disease vs. women in the U.S. at 1 in every 12 women. Peter quickly answered their obvious question recalling a field expedition he had taken with Chinese colleagues. His host had gone to a lot of trouble securing powdered cow's milk for him and he soon learned that there was no such thing as a dairy industry in China and that any dairy product had to be imported and secured at a high cost (compared to the U.S.). This revelation, Jane felt, saved her life (The Telegraph, 2014).

Dr. Plant's dairy-free experiment.

While there was very little research done at this time, there was enough to satisfy the Plants that it was worth a try. It was made clear that chemo and radiation was not going to be 'a cure' for her. So, she avoided dairy and switched to a whole food, dairy-free and red meat-free lifestyle. Five years later she passed the first long-term remission marker. It was the first since her original diagnosis and wrote a book, "Your Life in Your Hands", published in 2000. After 11 clear years, the cancer returned for a 6th time and she blamed herself for becoming lax in her avoidance of dairy in her diet. Over the course of that last decade she had begun regularly cooking with butter and consuming two favorite dishes she had once deprived herself of

previously that both had red meat and dairy as main ingredients. She and her oncologist created a chemo-free plan and felt she could beat it this time with just an estrogen-free plan which included her dairy-estrogen-free diet. She began letrozole, an estrogen suppressor, and went back on her strict diet. In 2016, completely free of cancer, at the age of 71, she died of a blood clot (Butler, 2017). Unfortunately, it could very well have been the time she spent on letrozole that caused the blood clot. According to Breastcancer.org, blood clots are the #1 reason women with breast cancer stop taking letrozole and other estrogen suppressors (2018). Sadly, many new studies suggest she may not have needed the letrozole at all.

Before we get to more of the science behind the biochemical mechanics of experiences like those of Dr. Plant, Dr. Satillaro, Shannon H., and hundreds of thousands like them, we'll look at the #1 fear of eliminating dairy: will my bones decay from lack of calcium? The science and likely your own recollection of seeing Chinese gymnasts, dancers, and elderly -- according to Travellers.com (2018) 5 of the world's top 7 countries boasting the longest lives are Asian (notoriously the lowest dairy consumers) -- may provide enough logic to put up a good fight with information that told you, "milk does a body good".

Dr. Neal Barnard stated, on a popular medical television program, "The Exam Room", that there was no research, *whatsoever*, that supported the "myth" that the dairy industry claimed boldly (and has gotten less bold and simply cleverer, he offers) that consuming cow dairy products benefits bone health. None. He cites an 18-year study concluding that fractures were just as likely to happen to those who consumed dairy on a regular basis and the control group which, culturally, never consumed it. He said there were 32 more studies concluding the same that were NOT paid for by the dairy industry and that there were no studies that concluded any

different *unless they were funded by those who benefited financially from the sale of dairy products* (2017).

Dr. Michael Klaper, who appears in the movie, “Cowspiracy”, agrees. He calls milk, “baby calf growth fluid” that is filled with hormones, proteins, lipids, sodium, growth factors, and IGF factors appropriate to grow a 65 lb. calf into a 1500-pound animal and points out that its consumption has health detriments to full-grown cows (years after weaning). He consistently tells his patients to look in the mirror and to only consume the “lactation secretions of a large bovine who just had a baby” if they see big long ears and a tail. Otherwise, he warns of stimulation of breast lumps, uterine fibroids, and cancerous prostates (Skywatch, Inc., 2018).

Dr. Christiane Northrup, a 3-decade author and educator of women’s health issues began her career as a Pediatrician in the NE of the U.S. She claimed she saw more health problems in her young patients from eating dairy than from anything else and that includes “red meat or sugar”. Her research was simply making a deal with her patients. They would go off dairy for two weeks. When they (and their parents) started to see their headaches, colds, strep throat, and chronic bronchitis (to name only a few ailments) disappear, she no longer had to ask them. They would reintroduce dairy and their own bodies’ reactions would help them quit again of their own volition. Later, when she saw the vast array of women’s issues from chronic leukorrhea, to rashes, to ovarian cancer statistics affected negatively by the consumption of dairy, she became a researcher and reporter of sorts. She noted that the studies showed that the wealthier the patient, the richer the food and the higher the consumption of butter, cheese, ice cream, the greater the cancer risk. Every marker correlated with a higher incidence of ovarian cancer. She asked her patients to look at the statistics of Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, and the US (among the

highest consumers of dairy foods) and to compare them with the low dairy consumers like Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore (Vegetarian Times, 1987).

These claims are far from limited to boisterous MDs on YouTube and those that might just be wanting to make a profit from selling controversial books. I wanted to know what Harvard School of Public Health had to say about calcium and dairy and found a whole lot more about dairy-linked cancers on their site than I had even been looking for. First, they explain that milk is not the only source of calcium and let the reader know immediately that it is also not the best source for the human body. They go on to explain that while calcium does lower the risk of osteoporosis and colon cancer, that intake of dairy can “increase the risk of prostate cancer and possibly ovarian cancer” and add that its high vitamin A levels, paradoxically, may weaken bones. I wondered why, even though obviously backed up by rigorous scientific research, they would be so bold as to take dairy completely out of their “healthy eating plate” dietary recommendation. This guideline, quite radically different from the “pyramid” I saw year in and year out in school during my formative years, actually has dairy under the “limit” category along with white rice, white bread, sugary drinks/foods and red meats. Toward the bottom of the page I clicked on the word, “why” (why their healthy eating plate differed from that of the U.S. Government’s MyPlate). Here’s what I read: “The Healthy Eating Plate is based exclusively on the best available science and was *not subjected to political or commercial pressures from food industry lobbyists*” (Harvard School of Public Health, 2015). The emphasis is mine. I thought about Nixon and Watergate for the first time in 20 or 30 years.

Another concurrent group is the well-respected Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Their site explains many medical truths that lobbyists and other special interest groups, some very powerful, like the Dairy Council, would keep the public in the dark about and

the lengths to which they often go read like chapters from a spy novel. But their focus is on the helpful information such as explaining that needing dairy for healthy bones is part of an enormous marketing campaign that was bought with advertising dollars and government bribe money (there's Watergate again). They also go into many of the cancers that have been linked to consumption of dairy. For instance, they claim that enough credible research has shown that foods like dairy (and red meat) that have actions on circulating hormone levels (most especially estrogen) will increase cancers such as breast cancer and prostate cancers and that in Asia, where soy products are commonly consumed rather than milk and tofu rather than cheese, people are not only healthier, but, their incidence of breast cancer is much rarer than in the U.S. and Europe (Physicians for Responsible Medicine, 2014).

One of PCRM's references led me to a "study of studies" on the National Institute of Health's government website looking at breast cancer studies associating the IGF-1 levels that are elevated with the consumption of dairy, as well as, the meat from cattle. IGF-1 is an insulin-like growth factor. Its main job is to regulate growth hormones which can highly affect the growth of cells – this of course, includes, cancer cells which seem to be more talented than other cells to opportunistically utilized these catalysts. The study concluded that, of the non-biased carefully conducted and relatively larger studies, the associations of IGF-1 levels were relatively strong and positively associated with breast cancer risk. A separate report, mentioned in this study, more than 15 years old, concluded a correlation between IGF levels and mammographic density – which is a strong breast cancer risk – and supported the food-induced IGF-1 theory upgrading the breast cancer risks in premenopausal women (Hankinson & Schernhammer, 2003).

Dr. Justine Butler, a UK Molecular Biologist, writes quite a bit about the detriments of dairy (and red meat, to a lesser extent) consumption in health magazines, her books, and her

blog. In one of her lengthy articles for Viva!, “White Lies” (now a book citing a compilation of hundreds of credible studies linking colorectal, prostate, breast, ovarian, and prostate cancers to the consumption of milk and milk products), she explains that not only is the scientific research beyond question at this point, especially in the hormone-dependent cancers such as ovarian, prostate, and breast cancers, that the laboratory (in vitro) studies are backing them up. A 2000 study by Yu and Rowan demonstrated that IGFs played a critical role in stimulating cancer cells’ growth in a wide range of cancers while suppressing apoptosis, or cell death, of these cancer cells. At Princeton University in New Jersey, their large study in 1997 concluded that milk may promote breast cancer from the direct action caused on the significant acceleration of cancer cell growth by IGF-1. Cows are simply a commodity and are therefore kept pregnant (elevating already enormously high hormone levels) for as long as possible and kept lactating through excruciating infections (mastitis) and other unhealthy states (reading about their treatment was near unbearable). Dr. Butler is concerned that the considerable level of estrogens, other estrogen metabolites, and raised IGF levels (which not only directly increase our blood levels, but, then continue, to also raise our own production of IGF-1 in the liver—perhaps our bodies begin to think we are big 1500 lb. cows?) are not the only carcinogens undermining our cancer-preventing immune systems (Butler, 2017).

Unfortunately, just as we may be on the verge of enlightenment about the detrimental mechanisms of this “white stuff”, it seems that on the other side of the globe, many are putting their heads in the sand.

That inspirational demographic, the Chinese non-dairy and practically cancer-free women, that Dr. Plant accredits her life to, may be extinct soon. A study conducted by Iowa State University concludes that China’s dairy consumption and the profits of its newly found Dairy Industry of

China (non-existent as recently as the 1980s) are on a quick rise. The wealthy population of the Nation seems to be spearheading it – likely due to more extensive travelling and “refining tastes” for culinary delights not-so-common in one’s own country. In 1996 the top 10%, in terms of monetary holdings, were consuming an average of around 5 kg per person and were closing in on 30 kg per capita as far back as 2005. (rapid rise)

Since the mid-1990s demand, especially in urban areas, has exploded (Zhou, Tian, and Zhou 2002; Yang, MacAulay, and Shen 2004). School milk programs and marketing cooperatives (quite identical, in fact, to the U.S. Dairy Industry strategy that began in the early 50s in the American market) have all noted the newly emerging role of dairy products. (News Desk, 2018). China’s production of dairy products has risen sharply and not surprisingly, so has its breast cancer statistics (Luo, 2017 .

China is still at only consuming .02 kg per capita for consumption of cow cheese – nowhere near the U.S. boastful 6.89 kg per person (News Desk, 2018). Also consider that the Asian Nation is not even in the top 50 countries of the world leading in the incidence of any cancer (they are still doing something right) while, the U.S. is in the top five countries of the world leading in cancer and this includes the lead China has over the U.S. in cigarette smoking cultural acceptance.

Now, consider that just quite recently, Chinese women have suddenly had a notable increase in breast cancer. They have had a whopping 3.5% average increase per year, each year from 2000 through 2013 and that rise is projected to double by 202 (American Institute of Cancer Research, 2018).

With a not-for-profit health care system, it would seem that what the Chinese may be gaining in procuring some of the “in house” profits from a new dairy industry, they will be paying out in

health care costs. It's as if they forgot what they knew long ago -- the Chinese medical professionals taught an American doctor, Dr. T. Colin Campbell, about the dangers of consuming cow dairy and its relation to cancers – especially those connected with the reproductive system – almost 4 decades ago. In “The China Study”, still considered the most in-depth study of nutrition and health ever conducted, Dr. Campbell cites many of the same biochemical mechanisms (as stated earlier) to explain why the consumption of cow dairy is only good for young animals of the same breed. So, understandably, it is detrimental to the health of an adult homo sapien. He said that his Chinese medical colleagues laughed at him for not knowing this and teasingly called him and other Americans “cross-feeders”. Dr. Campbell’s conclusions are straightforward: “Breast cancer is related to levels of female hormones in the blood” (China Study, pg.177, 2016).

Dr. Colin’s world-wide nutritional study also concluded: consuming dairy foods increases the risk of prostate cancer. Dairy intake is “one of the most consistent dietary predictors for prostate cancer in the published literature and those who consume the most dairy have double to quadruple the risk” (China Study, pg.177, 2016).

Before we get to the good news, here’s one last fact from American Physician, Author, and professional speaker, Michael McGregor, M.D. He explains on his website, Nutritionfacts.org, that while the dairy industry claims that the accumulation of pus in milk is just a natural part of the (sickly, abused, infectious) cow’s defense system. A study published by the “Journal of Dairy Science” explains that pus is the reason the more stringent European standardized cheese tastes better (they make the dairy farmers stop milking cows with inflamed and painfully infected teats, while the U.S. dairy industry says mastitis is fine and there’s no proof that pus is detrimental to human health. The same study showed that not only were there flavor defects in the American

pus-filled cow milk has textural flaws and increased clotting time . This suggests that there is a real chemical difference and one that may augment its detriments to human health, as well as, milk pus' obvious detriment to its texture and flavor? We can hope that the dairy farmer might discover that the money lost in allowing a cow's painfully infected teats recover might be gained back by the clotting time they'll save and the higher price they can command with tastier and well-textured cheese. Dr. McGregor argues that pasteurization does not change many biomolecular properties that harm human health (like hormones and IGF) and pus is probably no exception. He argues that if parents knew their children were warned that they are giving their children pasteurized pus, it may dissuade them just as cooked fecal matter on a label might do (Nutritionfacts.org, 2018).

So, the good news: whether its due to learning about the studies linking cow products to increased cancer risks, the easier ability to slim down, or just feeling better without it, the consumption of cow dairy is decreasing in direct inverse proportion to the rise of the consumption of non-dairy alternatives. Worldwide sales of non-dairy milk alternatives more than doubled between 2009 and 2015 with cow's milk dropping 13% in the U.S. over just the last five years. According to the focus groups of University of Virginia's Gastroenterology department, the factors contributing to this are many and varied but, linked with a new awareness of the nutrition and health link: discovered food allergy to milk or lactose intolerance, vegan diets, concern over hormonal content and antibiotics used in dairy farms, or saturated fact levels (Bridges, 2018) . This also means more tasty substitutes than 30 – 40 years ago. A merging competitive market has already provided us with delicious almond cheeses, dairy-free pizzas, coconut milk ice creams and cheese cakes that have helped to ease the pain of dozens of my own patients that have newly 'converted'.

There are coconut creamers, and almond silks, and note that soy milk, ounce per ounce, has the same amount of protein as the “cow juice”, but, without the saturated fat, lactose, steroids, antibiotics, cancer-growth stimulating hormones, enormous IGF-1 levels, and no pus!

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