

Sara Groos & Caroline O'Brien

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COMM 3201

Prof. Nisbet

February 5th Class Period:

Caulfield, T. (2012). *The Cure For Everything: Untangling Twisted Messages About Health, Fitness and Happiness*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press

- The stages and efforts of Caulfield trying to lose weight
- Stats of successful weight loss and powerful social, industry, and psychological forces at work against efforts to lose weight
- Labeling fast food and snacks products as “poison”
- Drinking diet coke, people can unconsciously think that they can eat more since they consumed a diet something instead of regular
- Sodium! Should be avoided
- 2010 study in journal of American Dietary Association on the calorie content of reduced calorie foods

Discussion questions:

- 1) How could government attention and recommendations to the food industry really benefit peoples views and habits towards food?
- 2) With all the different foods to eat/not eat/ diet, do you need to label your diet?

Taubes, G. (2011, April 13). Is Sugar Toxic? New York Times Magazine

The article by Gary Taube's "Is Sugar Toxic?" aims to find clear answers of how dangerous and toxic sugar may be to human kind. Throughout his article he analysis various findings about the harmful effects that sugar causes and the argument that Robert Lustig made on May 26th 2009, "Sugar: The Bitter Truth", in more depth.

Robert Lustig, a pediatric hormone disorder and childhood obesity specialist, did a 90 minute lecture about how sugar can be seen as both a "toxin" and a "poison". He refers to sugar as "the most demonized additive known to man (1)" and "a poison itself (2)", defining sugar as beet and cane sugar and high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). He believes that sugar can be compared to cigarettes and alcohol, a substance that slowly kills us. Furthermore Taube's admits that the research he has conducted over the past few years have been almost identical to what Lustig suggests.

If sugar were actually a toxin then this would explain the rising levels of obese and diabetic Americans. However Taube's clearly explains that there have been never ending discussions over whether or not sugar is a toxin. All of the discussions have been unsuccessful with providing a definite conclusion. The discussions began when sugar was replaced by HFCS in 1980 due to soft drinks. HFCS was perceived as harmless by the public, however what the public did not know is that it was as harmful as sugar. Harmful meaning that we consume too much of it and that sugar does not contain vital nutrimental elements, such as protein and vitamins. According to Lustig, sugar may also disrupt our metabolism.

Throughout the remainder of the article Taubes touches upon various findings that have either ignored or supported the view that sugar is perceived as a toxin. For example in the 20th century the authorities on diabetes in both North America and Europe supported the idea that

sugar caused diabetes, because they observed that countries that did not have an excess consumption of sugar had lower patients with diabetes. Later on, researchers found that the consumption of sugar was linked to metabolic syndrome. They found that metabolic syndrome, a process where the body resist insulin, often caused heart disease and diabetes. And in 2004 findings suggested that metabolic syndrome encouraged tumor growth in the human body, which increased the risk of being diagnosed with cancer. The article lists two observations that support this relationship. One, the amount of patients that died of cancer experienced a large increase between the late 19th century and early 20th century and two, populations that consumed less sugar had lower numbers of cancer patients.

Although all of the findings explained in the article could support the evidence that sugar is harmful, Taubes believes that we need more research. Even Lustig himself admits that sugar could be seen as “toxin”, but that it is not definite. Taubes ends the article with conflicting thoughts explaining to the readers that for now we should not over consume sugar and most importantly not be too concerned about its harmful effects, although he himself is.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do you think Lustig is over reacting when he says that sugar is equally as bad as consuming cigarettes and alcohol?
- 2) If sugar is considered as bad as cigarettes and alcohol, then why do we still find it as an ingredient in nearly every food product that we consume?
- 3) What may be some reasons that have prevented researchers to find significant evidence about the harms of consuming sugar?

Bora, S.T. & Bouchoux, A. (2009). Effects of Science and the Media on Consumer Perceptions of about Dietary Sugars. Journal of Nutrition, 139, 1214S-1218S

The study conducted by Bora and Bouchoux examined both consumers perception on rising levels of obesity caused by dietary sugars, low-carbohydrate diets, the glycemic index (GI) and high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) and the way in which debates about scientific findings and policies on various nutrients influence announcements made by the media. The study touches upon various issues such as the history of diets and declarations about sugars, policy regulations on sugar intake in schools, media coverage of diet and sugars and lastly consumer's awareness and perceptions.

Beginning with history, researchers noticed that the first regulation appeared between 1990 and 2000. The "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" began using the word "moderate" to describe the recommended intake of sugar by an individual. However after individuals finally began to decrease their daily sugar intake a report in 2002 suggested that there was no clear relationship between sugar and weight gain. Sugar intake began to increase again, until in 2003 WHO and FAO released a report that urged individuals to focus on both a healthy diet and their levels of physical activity in order to decrease the risk of chronic diseases. Furthermore the WHO and FAO advised individuals to focus on eliminating "free sugars", commonly known as added sugars, from their diet. An expanded version of this guide appeared in 2005, where individuals were further advised to consume certain foods, such as fruit and vegetables, to eliminate chances of experiencing unhealthy weight gain.

A further examination conducted by researchers focused on the regulations of sugar in take in schools. Researchers observed how, during the last 3 to 5 years, multiple efforts have been made to control consumption and portion size in schools. For example in 2006 food

companies cooperated with “Alliance for a Healthier Generation” to eliminate foods that contained added sugar and in 2007 further regulations were made that eliminated foods containing energy from fat, such as trans-fat and saturated fat.

Researchers found that before 2002 media coverage, regarding sugar in take and obesity, was not widely reported and the first real concerns about sugar in take appeared between 2002 and 2007, when a peer-reviewed journal article exposed the findings of obesity rates being positively correlated with sugar in take. Further findings suggested that multiple diets, such as the GI diet and low-carbohydrate diet, covered by the global media had a significant influence on consumers. Global media also seemed to cover the obesity epidemic and risks of sugar. However researchers noted that much of the coverage on obesity and sugar did not include HFCS. Therefore there is no surprise that consumers are more aware about sugars and carbohydrates than HFCS. Because consumers have been given various health messages about the dangers of sugar and carbohydrates, researchers found that consumer’s perceptions consumption of those items have experienced on going changes. As for HFCS, researchers admitted that “consumers were unsure about how HFCS was made (4)”.

To conclude, researchers mention how media sources have confused consumers about various health messages that prevent them to manage their sugar intake effectively. To eliminate this reoccurrence in the future, researchers advise nutrient communicators to “develop simple, usable, and sound messages that take consumer food preferences into consideration (5).”

Discussion Questions:

1) What are some examples or tactics nutrient communicators could give out to consumers to reduce confusion when analyzing health messages?

2) Do you think regulating portion size and controlling consumption of certain foods in schools is a good enough strategy to ensure that students pick up healthy eating behaviors?

3) Living in a world surrounded by unhealthy food advertisements and choices, do you believe that peoples eating behavior today has improved or worsened since 2009 (the year the article was published)?

Katz, D. (2014, June 16). Ending the war that nobody started. *The Huffington Post*

- **Food industry has mis-lead consumers and influenced our dietary pattern
- low fat snack foods came on market-- when advice about dietary fat was first issued
- 4 important considerations
- 1. intake of calories from veggies has gone down 3% since the 1970's
- 2. increased our calorie intake
- 3. we aren't clueless about the basic care and feeding of homosapiens
- It is good that the basic theme of healthful eating is clear enough for someone willing to see it
- 4. All dietary fat isn't bad for you
- Facts:
 - mediterranean diet is healthy option, fish oil is good for us
 - 1.5 % of Americans meet daily recommendations for both veggies and fruit

Discussion questions:

1) Which tactics has the food industry used to mis lead consumers?

2) Did anyone really every declare a war against a dietary fat?

3) Why we began to eat sugary, starchy, and low fat junk foods?

Brean, J. (2014, March 28). Farewell to gluten free: Why we are so easily fooled by pseudoscience and marketing gimmicks when it comes to food. *The National Post*.

- People assume gluten free diet is healthier
- Gluten- a complex protein
- Blaming gluten for being associated with:
 - Autoimmune disorders,
 - bloating
 - diabetes
 - depression
 - autism
 - schizophrenia
- Too late to try to jump on train with gluten free sellers, started 3 years ago
- Gluten free can be a healthy luxury
- very pricey brands and competitors
- Gluten free: flipside to nutrient fetish, substances actually added
- People have been treating food and how they eat “like religion”

Discussion questions:

- 1) Food is a problem & solution-- how?
- 2) Misinformed info to consumers can lead to what kind of health/food problems?

Specter, M. (2014, Nov. 3). Against the Grain: Should You Go Gluten Free? The New Yorker.

In the article the author, Michael Specter, discusses whether or not one should attempt to be gluten free and most importantly examines why people have experienced the sudden urge to become gluten free.

Historically speaking, people have been consuming wheat for many years. Recently wheat has also become an ingredient for many other products, then in just bread. According to the article, nearly a third of all products in America have wheat as an ingredient. Therefore Specter's question remains simple, "how could gluten, present in a staple food that has sustained humanity for thousands of years, have suddenly become so threatening? (5)" His curiosity is focused on the population that have had a sudden urge to live a gluten-free life, excluding the one per cent that have a celiac disease. A condition that prohibits people to digest gluten. Now a day's numerous people complain that they experience non-celiac gluten sensitivity, a discomfort they feel in their stomachs after digesting gluten products. For this phenomenon Specter primarily blames two authors that have encouraged gluten-free diets, William Davis and David Perlmutter, who published a book that influenced people to change their thoughts about gluten. Williams Davis described gluten as a "culinary villain" and David Perlmutter even mentions how "gluten sensitivity represents one of the greatest and most under-recognized health threats to humanity (3)".

However those two authors are not the only ones to blame. Numerous researchers have suggested various reasons for why gluten-free has become such a trend in America. Some researchers have suggested that the genes in wheat are harmful, that the bread we eat today is entirely different from the bread we ate years ago. On the other hand other researchers claim that

the difference in wheat genes have no significant relationship on the way our stomach digests gluten. Further researchers say that it is a problem with our environment. It was not until 2011, where Peter Gibson, found clear evidence that gluten may be the cause of why people without celiac disease experience discomfort and further detailed research made by Gibson found that it was not specifically gluten that caused discomfort but rather FODMAPs (fermentable, oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols) found in products. However before people could focus on the second findings, the previous ones were released. This caused millions of people to become gluten-free. Although the real cause for these people to experience recurrent stomach problems were FODMAPs, they still blamed gluten. Specter also describes his visit to “The Bread Lab” team in the article. The team was created by Jonathan Bethony, who primarily blames vital wheat gluten for the digestion problems people have experienced, not FODMAPs. Although he has no clear evidence or understanding of what impact vital wheat gluten may have on a person’s digestive system it is clear that too much of it in bread may be harmful.

To conclude Specter explains how gluten-free has become just another example of how fad dieting can occur in our society. As he explains “there is convincing and repeated evidence that dietary self-diagnosis are almost always wrong, particularly when the diagnosis extends to most of society (16-17).” The food industry keeps on shaping the idea that we must change our eating behaviors in order to follow the norm. Specter mentions how becoming gluten-free, when you do not have celiac disease, may be less beneficial than one may think. It is often unclear what ingredients have replaced gluten in gluten-free products, which could cause potential health problems.

Discussion questions:

- 1) What causes people to follow fad diets and why?
- 2) Why might doctors and physician also be influenced by the idea that gluten-free will prevent stomach problems?
- 3) To what extent is it even possible to influence people not to follow fad diets, if doctors and physician are influenced by them too?