Nutrition Controversies in Medical Practice

The body of scientific evidence for the role of nutrition in clinical practice has grown enormously in recent years. Key areas of controversy remain, however, and present challenges for clinicians seeking to understand applications of nutrition for their patients. This session examines three areas where scientific evidence has recently come to the fore and presents evidence regarding the role of nutrition in disease processes.

1. Should nutrition be the treatment of choice for menopausal symptoms?

Vasomotor symptoms of menopause are commonly treated with estrogens or estrogen-progestogen combinations, which have significant risks limiting their use. Recent studies have suggested that dietary interventions may have greater efficacy than previously thought, and a favorable safety profile. Current evidence on the efficacy and safety of nutrition interventions for vasomotor symptoms will be presented.

2. What is the role of nutrition in autoimmune conditions?

Multiple sclerosis, asthma, thyroid disorders, and other autoimmune conditions may be influenced by environmental factors, including diet. Current evidence on the role of diet for autoimmune conditions will be presented, along with a discussion of possible mechanisms. Roles for nutrition in clinical practice will be discussed.

3. How do dairy products influence cancer risk?

In observational studies, dairy product consumption is associated with increased prostate and ovarian cancer incidence and reduced colorectal cancer incidence. While a substantial body of evidence has accumulated for these associations, it has not yet influenced public health policies in the U.S. The body of evidence for the association between dairy consumption and cancer will be described, along with possible pathological mechanisms that may explain these associations.

Objectives:

After this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe effective nutritional approaches to the vasomotor symptoms of menopause.
2. Name the leading theories that explain the increased incidence of autoimmune disorders over the past several decades.
3. Describe dietary influences on the microbiome and how these changes may promote autoimmune conditions.
4. Explain possible mechanisms by which dairy consumption may influence the risk of common cancers.

Presenters: