



The Nutrition Coalition Update | November 25, 2019

- 2020 Dietary Guidelines Repeating Past Mistakes, Still Lack Scientific Rigor
- Top Scientists Say Guidelines' Committee Errs on Saturated Fats
- U.S. Rep. Fortenberry Notes that Obesity Epidemic Began with the Guidelines

RECAP OF GUIDELINES' ADVISORY COMMITTEE LATEST MEETING: 2020 PROCESS REPEATING PAST MISTAKES, STILL LACKS SCIENTIFIC RIGOR

The expert committee reviewing the science for America's nutrition policy, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), held its third, two-day meeting in Washington, D.C., towards the end of October. While the committee is working hard to review the science, the process still suffers from significant flaws. These include a lack of up-to-date methods for reviewing the science as well as fundamental problems in the reviews on low-carb diets and saturated fats. Methods for reviewing the science are at the crux of ensuring a trustworthy, reliable DGA. Without adequate protocols, the risk of cherry-picking studies and lax reviews of the evidence can creep into the process, resulting in unreliable recommendations. We've seen this in the past, with erroneous caps on dietary cholesterol and total fat. Unless changes are made to the current process, we are headed towards another set of flawed dietary guidelines. [Read](#) the blog by Nina Teicholz, Executive Director of The Nutrition Coalition, on the meeting of the DGA Advisory Committee.

SATURATED FATS' REVIEW BY GUIDELINES COMMITTEE FLAWED, SAY LEADING SCIENTISTS

A large, international group of scientists [submitted a public comment](#) to the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, regarding the latest consensus science on saturated fats, published recently in *The BMJ*. This comment makes a number of important points regarding saturated fats, none of which are currently being addressed by the USDA review on the topic. Among the *BMJ*'s points are: "1) Saturated fatty acids is not a single group with identical biological effects, but many different fatty acids with very diverse effects. 2) The effects of saturated fatty acids on CVD not only depends on the specific fatty acid, but also on the food matrix they exist in. 3) Therefore the approach to look at saturated fat as one group is likely to lead to erroneous conclusions. 4) You need to move from a nutrient based analytical strategy to a food based [strategy], which also makes sense for the translation of conclusions to advise to the public – 'people are eating foods not nutrients.' "

CONGRESS IS ALSO CONCERNED THAT THE GUIDELINES HAS NOT LED TO BETTER HEALTH IN AMERICA

“The beginning of the Dietary Guidelines pretty much coincides with the start of the obesity epidemic,” [observed Rep Jeff Fortenberry](#) (R-NE), in a meeting of the [House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies](#). He goes on to discuss the lack of rigorous, systematic reviews of science in the Dietary Guidelines.



LOW-CARB ACTION NETWORK

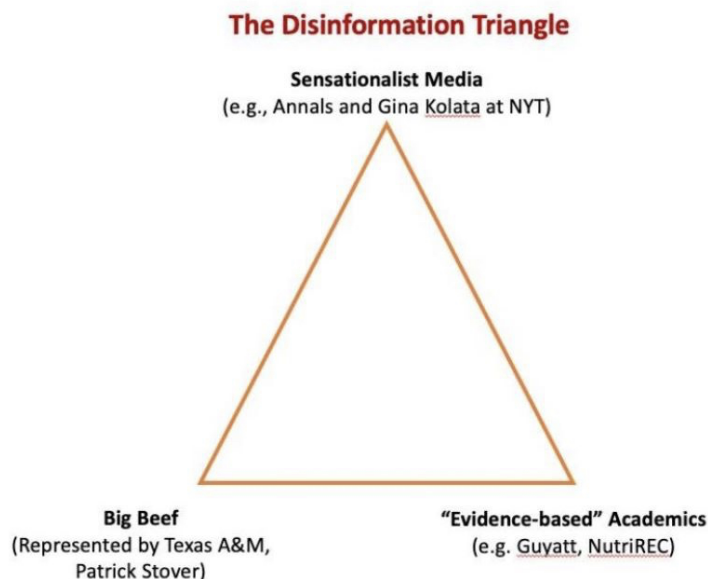
A new group, called the Low-Carb Action Network (L-CAN), is making its voice heard, with the aim of ensuring that a 'true' low-carb diet is included in the 2020 Guidelines. The group's early efforts resulted in some 350 people submitting public comments to the DGA Committee about its proposal to define a “low-carb” diet as 45% of calories or less. Leading experts in the field generally consider a low-carb diet to have a maximum of 25% of calories as carbohydrates. The 350 comments by low-carb advocates represent a startling 85% of total comments during the two-week period allowed for public input on the 2020 protocols.

Learn more about L-CAN by signing up [here](#), or follow the group on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

NUTRITION NEWS

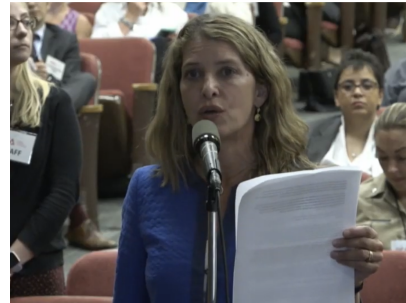
- The controversy over red meat and whether it causes disease has been much in the headlines since the first rigorous systematic reviews on the subject were published on October 1, in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. An important aspect of these reviews is that they used the “GRADE” methodology for reviewing the science, a system adopted by more than 150 public health groups, including the World Health Organization. The debate over the red-meat findings has raised the question of whether our Guidelines ought to be based on a similarly rigorous review methodology, as recommended by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. In case you missed it, Nina Teicholz, [wrote an op-ed on the red-meat study](#) and its wider implications, for the *Los Angeles Times*.
- We're always surprised by how much bullying we see in nutrition science.

The red meat studies, with their controversial findings, have drawn particular ire from the epidemiologists at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, who have long promoted a vegetarian diet. These researchers, together with the vegetarian advocacy group, The True Health Initiative, tried to get the red-meat papers retracted before they were even published and have vigorously criticized the scientists responsible for the reviews. See, for example, this recent presentation slide from Harvard's Walter Willett, in which he claims that a "Disinformation Triangle" is at work behind the red-meat reviews. He lambasts Gina Kolata, a science writer at the *New York Times*, for her [relatively balanced piece on the red meat studies](#); He diminishes evidence-based science by putting the term in quotes, and he accuses Patrick Stover, one of the papers' authors, as having undisclosed conflicts of interest. The language here strikes us as immoderate and reminds us of when Willett [called a 2014 paper he disliked "a pile rubbish."](#) For this, he was rebuked by no less than the editorial board of *Nature*, [for his apparent attempts to stifle](#) contrary findings "purely because they don't blend uncertainty into a simple mantra.'



- Finally, a [Bloomberg op-ed](#) this month highlights the importance of the Guidelines, echoing the lasting, negative consequences that have resulted from this policy's flaws since 1980. The piece discusses the recent red-meat papers and highlights how the science has flip-flopped.

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