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PATIENT RETURNS ONE WEEK LATER

By Dr. Kerry Graff

KG: “So, what did you think about “Forks Over Knives?”

TM: “Wow, it makes a lot of sense. But it is hard to believe it is true when the government and doctors aren’t talking about it. How come I haven’t heard any of this before?”

KG: “I’ve been a doctor for twenty years and I just learned about all this in the last few years, although the data has been accumulating for decades. We are taught next to nothing about nutrition in medical school and residency. What we did learn was what the USDA recommends, but the USDA is really a farmer’s advocacy group and doesn’t base its recommendations primarily on health.

I bought into the same propaganda that you did--that “Milk does a body good” and that meat is a necessary source of protein. I had been encouraging patients, women especially, to get three servings of low fat milk products a day to help their bones. I was shocked to learn that people living in countries that eat the most dairy and meat have the WORST bones. I realized that I had been harming

patients with my old advice. It is hard for doctors to open their minds to the idea that they have been wrong about something so important to health.

It also means that doctors have way less control over health than patients do, which is a blow to our egos, and also to our pocketbooks. We get paid for treating illness with pills and procedures, not for keeping people healthy in the first place by providing disease-preventing dietary advice. Let me assure you that the folks in the documentary aren't quacks and the science behind it is legitimate. How have you done with the diet changes I asked you to make?"

TM: "It wasn't that hard. I like oatmeal and soup anyway, so I was just swapping a tasty (but unhealthy) food that I enjoyed for a very healthy and even tastier one. I have a microwave at work, so it was easy to heat it up. My wife and I made a big pot of soup over the weekend. We also made veggie chili and had that for dinner on two of the nights. I had a few days when I didn't eat any meat, dairy or eggs at all! Cutting back on the alcohol has been a problem though. I really enjoy it."

KG: "What do you like so much about drinking wine?"

TM: "Well, I feel like I deserve it after a hard day at work. It helps me relax. My wife and I drink it together and we hang out, but she usually only drinks two glasses."

KG: "You do deserve to relax and to have an enjoyable time with your wife. What other ways do you relax and what other things do you enjoy doing together?"

TM: "I do yoga stretches on my own at home. It helps my back from the scoliosis. And my wife and I do a lot of bike riding and hiking together. I love that. Cooking together

this past week, looking at recipes and menu planning has been fun, actually. We went online and found a bunch of whole food, plant-based recipes on the *Forks Over Knives* website to help us with dinner planning. I know you didn't ask me to move ahead with changing up dinners yet, but we got excited and just dove in. My energy is better. And all the vague stomach stuff I had been having is a lot better, too."

KG: "Great! Keep doing all that good stuff. You are lucky you have a partner on board with the diet changes you are making. It is really hard when a couple isn't doing this together. And yoga is terrific, both mentally and physically. Do you do the relaxation part of yoga as well as the stretches and does your wife do it with you?"

TM: "No. I don't and she doesn't. But she would probably love that. I'll ask her. Maybe we could do that for a half hour before we start making dinner together. I bet that would help me drink a little less wine."

KG: "Great idea! With the kidney stones, it is really important to stay well hydrated. Wine is a diuretic and actually dehydrates you. Maybe you could make sure to drink a large glass of water after yoga before you start drinking wine. And maybe you could limit it to one glass of wine before and one with dinner. If you are still feeling the need for some TLC (tender loving care) after your second glass of wine, you could try a hot cup of decaffeinated tea or coffee after the meal. Or maybe a little TLC from your wife. Sound doable?"

TM: "Oh yeah, I am willing to try that."

We redid the 4Leaf Survey and he was up to 18 (2Leaf level), likely getting between 40-60% of his calories from whole plant foods. Where did he still

need work? He was eating more whole grains, but a lot of them were processed like whole wheat bread and pasta. He was still using a lot of olive oil and drinking too much wine. There was still some meat and fish in his diet.

KG: “Tom, do you remember the Daily Reporting Version of the 4Leaf Survey in the back of the packet I gave you last week? Do you think you could score your points every day for the next month until your next visit, with a goal to get above 30 points every day? It will help you see what you are doing right and also where you are missing the mark.

Remember, you should count each glass of wine against your score as a sugar point. Your almond milk and the whole wheat bread or pastas you eat don’t count against you, but also don’t give you positive points. They may be plant-based, but they are processed, so not as healthy as whole foods. And you can sauté with any liquid. You don’t need oil.

TM: “But isn’t olive oil healthy?”

KG: “Well, it is healthier than some other oils but it is definitely NOT a health food. Remember the part in *Forks Over Knives* about endothelial cells in blood vessels? Any type of oil increases inflammation and makes plaque unstable. You already have plaque buildup in your arteries. You don’t want more and you certainly don’t want to make anything unstable and likely to rupture and form a clot.”

TM: “Got it. Oil is out!”

KG: “You are making great progress, Tom. I can’t wait to see how much more you have moved up the 4Leaf chart when I see you back in a month!”