

SPECIAL CLOSING FROM A GOOD FRIEND

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A DOCTOR'S WORD
IS SECOND ONLY TO GOD'S

In 2005, I was a featured speaker at the Missouri Foundation for Health Obesity Summit, sharing the stage with then Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. In his opening remarks, he told about being in the 4th grade in Arkansas when his teacher asked the students to bring in symbols of their religion for show and tell.

One of Mike's classmates was Jewish, so he brought in a Menorah and explained its significance. Another little girl was Catholic and brought her special Rosary for all to see. Ten-year-old Mike Huckabee told his class that he was Southern Baptist and came toting a covered casserole dish as a symbol of his religion and its abundance of food related fellowship!

Needless to say, the audience roared with laughter. The Governor chuckled, as well, but went on to explain the sad reality of our prevailing health statistics, noting that regular church-attendees have higher obesity and chronic disease rates than non-church-goers.

Fast forward ten years, and we're in worse shape now than we were back in 2005; yet, the good news is that up to

80% of all healthcare spending is tied the treatment of conditions resulting from poor lifestyle choices. And, as you've read throughout this book, food trumps all.

Over the past few years, I've come to recognize that the #1 cause of most chronic disease AND the #1 cause of many of our most pressing global sustainability issues is one and the same: our western industrialized diet. The foods we should be eating to protect our health and prevent disease are the exact same choices we should make in regard to the big picture of global sustainability, natural resource preservation, and our ability to feed the world's burgeoning population.

From a Judeo Christian perspective, it's truly remarkable that that which God designed to be the foundation for man's food is what's best for our health and for our planet.

“I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.” –Genesis 1:29

I'm always the one telling Jim that I'd prefer he stop referring to humans as "the infestation of planet earth." He does have a point in that we humans have run roughshod over the earth, particularly during the past century. We were entrusted with this beautiful planet and all of its natural resources, yet we have been horrible stewards---of the Earth and of our own health.

Even Pope Francis is becoming a leading voice in raising awareness about global sustainability, although he has yet to acknowledge the powerful connection to our food choices. I believe he simply does not yet know what he does not know. He soon will if J. Morris Hicks has anything to do with it.

Jim Hicks and I first crossed paths in early 2008, both recently having had our paradigm-shifts, which Jim refers to as his "blinding flash of the obvious." We have been close friends, colleagues and collaborators ever since, bonded by our shared passion for the subject matter outlined in this book.

In 2013, I co-founded *The Plantrician Project*, a not-for-profit dedicated to creating events, tools and resources for medical professionals and their patients and clients. Together with Dr. Scott Stoll and Tom Dunnam, both introduced to me by Jim, we produce the CME-accredited International Plant-based Nutrition Healthcare Conference (pbnhc.com) each year and the International Cardiovascular Nutrition Summit. We also provide plantbaseddocs.com as mentioned earlier.

The impetus for *Plantrician* was this burning question: "How do we most effectively reach, inspire and guide all people of the western world and emerging economies in making the shift from the SAD to the predominantly whole food, plant-based dietary lifestyle that is optimal for human health, healthcare system sustainability and global resource preservation?"

Physicians and healthcare professionals hold the key—as they're the most-trusted source of patient and client dietary recommendations. Individuals may read books and watch films that espouse the benefits of a plant-based lifestyle; but, until physicians and other wellness practitioners understand and embrace the benefits and, in turn, promote patient adoption, this dietary shift on a broad scale will be elusive. Yet, our medical education system is nearly devoid of nutrition education, focusing almost exclusively on an allopathic, "diagnose, treat and medicate" curriculum.

It's organizations like *The Plantrician Project* that are leading

the charge—shining a bright light on the need for our clinicians and allied health professionals to learn about and embrace the overwhelming evidence that supports the efficacy of whole, plant-based nutrition and its ability to prevent, suspend and often, even reverse the chronic, degenerative disease that's wreaking havoc on hundreds of millions of lives and entire nations around the world.

Prior to meeting Jim, I had been president of a worksite health promotion company, taking the status quo approach: biometric screenings and health risk assessments, with employees found to have chronic conditions being directed to see their primary care physicians and get a script. This was followed by the drum beat of medication persistency. I finally took a step back and asked myself, "Did God really design us all to become chronically ill and dependent on prescription meds?"

I was also beginning to question why so little effort and funding was dedicated to identifying and eradicating the cause of disease. While "prevention" was given lip service, it was usually in the context of mammograms or colonoscopies. Prevention and early detection are not synonymous. Far from it!

It was perfect timing when I was invited to a presentation by a local oncologist. She began her talk by sharing the story about her previous ill health issues; including arthritis, fibromyalgia, and a skin condition. She said that she had been surviving on caffeinated beverages and the treats her patients brought to her. She proceeded to hold up a book and say, "This book has changed my life and is changing the lives of many of my patients."

It was *The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell. I bought a copy and could not put it down, now referring to it as the most paradigm-shifting read of my adult life. Not only was

it the most comprehensive study of the correlation between nutrition and human health ever published, it also connected the dots between the status quo and our broken disease and disability care system.

I finally understood that we do not have a "health" care system, but, rather, a system so aptly described by medical journalist Shannon Brownlee in *Escape Fire*, "We have a disease care system, and we have a *very profitable* disease care system—it doesn't want you to die and it doesn't want you to get well; it just wants you to keep coming back for the care of your chronic disease."

The winds of change are blowing, as physicians and medical professionals around the world awaken to the fact that a pill for every ill is not sustainable, nor is it in the best interest of patients.

Dr. Kerry Graff, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Lifestyle Medicine 2014, is a glowing example of a physician who is re-engineering her practice in a way that enables her to educate, equip and empower her patients with the information and resources needed for them to seize an enormous amount of control over their health.

Using food as medicine must become the foundation of a transformed and sustainable healthcare system, ushering in *sustainable* human health and a *sustainable* world. This information-packed 4Leaf Guide is just what the doctor ordered--providing a powerful tool that medical professionals can use to confidently prescribe the 4Leaf lifestyle to their patients and clients.