

What If It's All a Big Fat Lie?

Dr. Ross Walker



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What if they got it all wrong? When I say "they" I am referring to conventional medical wisdom over the past 25 to 30 years. We have been bombarded with health information; much of it's misleading and some of it is frankly wrong. To give you one very important example, every single person in this auditorium, everybody living in modern society, has been involved in an experiment and that experiment has gone sadly and horribly wrong. The experiment I'm referring to is the low fat diet because many people are getting sicker. Most people you speak to are tired; we have now rapid rates of obesity. In fact, the front page of USA Today this morning reads, "Health Spending Soars for Obesity." Thirty-six billion dollars in America this year will be spent on obesity related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease that is still the number one killer.

I want to tell you a story about the inflatable boy. The inflatable boy was sitting in his inflatable classroom with his inflatable classmates and he said, "I have had enough of this, I'm leaving." He walks down the inflatable corridor and the inflatable headmaster comes out and says "What do you think you are doing, boy?" The inflatable boy said "I'm leaving." The inflatable headmaster said, "No, you're not." The inflatable boy said, "Yes I am" and pulled a safety pin out of his pocket. Psss. He stuck it into the inflatable headmaster. Psss. Then he went on a rampage with his safety pin sticking the walls, sticking anyone that came near him. He's running down his road into his inflatable house, sits on his inflatable bed and says, "Oh my God, what have I done?" All of a sudden, there is a knock on the inflatable door and it's the inflatable police man who walks in and says, "You're in trouble, boy." The inflatable boy says, "Oh no, I'm not." He pulls the safety pin out, psss into himself, and now he is resuscitated and taken to the inflatable hospital where he wakes up in the bed next to the inflatable headmaster who looks at him and says, "I'm very disappointed in you, boy. You have let me down, you have let your school down but, worst of all, you have let yourself down."

Ladies and gentlemen, I have believed we have been let down by conventional wisdom. Look at how medicine

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is practiced these days. It's what I call "the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff syndrome." We have that ambulance parked at the bottom of the cliff waiting for people to fall off. Instead of fixing the problems at the top of the cliff, we build faster ambulances. Take the example of the most common operation in western society: coronary artery bypass. The surgeon comes in after the operation and states, "These hands have cured you," Do you know the difference between God and the cardiothoracic surgeon? God doesn't think he is a cardiothoracic surgeon. This guy is trying to convince you that he has cured you. All he has done is bypassed a few blockages. He has done nothing to the underlying process which is a condition called arteriosclerosis. It is the progressive build up of fat in your arteries. Every person in this room has fat building up in the walls of their arteries. My colleagues say to me, "Ross, what are you carrying on with all of this preventive stuff for? "Why do you write those books on prevention and go all over the world speaking on prevention?" We have terrific treatments for heart disease; we have bypass, we have stents, we have aspirin, we have statins (you know, Provicol, Zocor, Lipitor, Crestor: here a tor, there a tor, everywhere a tor tor). I say to them, if we have such great treatments for heart disease, would someone please explain to me why the first presentation of heart disease in 1 in 3 people is sudden death. That's not good treatment when you're missing 1 in 3 people. The best treatment of heart disease, the best treatment of cancer, the best treatment of all modern conditions is not to get the stuff in the first place. It's called prevention.

Everything is in five's: you have five digits on your hand; you have five senses. There are five preventive measures:

1. Accurate assessment
2. High quality nutrition
3. Regular exercise and movement program
4. Quit any addictions
5. How you use your mind.

Number 1: let's have a quality assessment. You may already have a problem and let me give you some advise:

don't wait until the disease happens. But if you're getting symptoms, if you're getting problems, get them sorted out now. I want to tell you a story of a 14 year-old boy who from a very early age was a champion runner but at the age of 9 when he went into the finals of races, and he always use to beat everyone in the heats without any problems, he would get into the finals towards the end of the race he would start getting pains in his chest and collapse. This didn't happen to him once or even twice or 10 times; this happened to him 25 times in major finals and he was one of the best runners in Australia. He saw 10 specialists. They said things like "it's all psychological because he is getting stressed about the big race," or "it's something you're just going to have to live with; give up your passion."

Give up your passion? How many times do you hear people say that? The parents were talking to their financial planner who happens to be a MDRT member. As you know an MDRT member doesn't just accept conventional wisdom; they think outside the square. This man said "I heard this guy Walker speak at a conference a few weeks ago. I think he could help you." So this boy was referred to me and I did the most important test anyone can do on a patient. The most important test is to listen to what the patients say to you. He had a clear-cut history of a reflex problem in his heart. I did a test that confirmed my suspicions. Now before every major race, I give him a tiny dose of beta blocker which affects the cardiac reflexes and he is now back winning races. In the last 12 months, he has now won 5 major races all because their advisor thought outside the square and didn't want to just give a financial service but wanted to give a life service to people.

The second thing I want to tell you about assessments is that my advisor is also my best friend and has been my best friend for about 30 years. He has been an MDRT member for 23 years and he is, in fact, in the audience today. He thinks outside the square; he gets all of his clients to come through my practice for a preventive assessment, not when they get sick, he wants to stop them from getting sick. What we do is get a full clinical profile, a full history examination, and we also have a new test called arterial screening. Arterial screening is a simple technique where

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you take something that looks like a pen, place it over the artery in the wrist and measure the stiffness in the arteries. If you have stiff arteries, you have fat in your arteries; if you don't have stiff arteries, it's highly unlikely you have fat in your arteries. Who should be having these preventive assessments? I believe firmly if you're over 30 with a heart, you should have this preventive assessment with the arterial screen and also specialized blood test

Number 2 is high quality nutrition. We hear all about these diets and we all know diets don't work. We all know that it's so simple: calories in verses calories burned. If your calories in is more than your calories burned, you put on weight. If your calories in is less than your calories burned, you lose weight. That's diets in an absolute nutshell; you need to know nothing more about that. There is a certain mix of food: if it's in a box or a container in a thickened hardened state with trans fats and a used by date, it is killing you. Bakery foods are not much better. I much prefer to see you sit down and have a piece of steak than having a donut or a croissant or a low fat muffin. I'm not going to pick on any one particular take away food outlet because they're all as bad as one another. I can tell you this is what is killing our society we're eating too much garbage; we're not eating naturally. There are foods that are good for you; just to give you one example 2 or 3 fish meals per week reduces your risk for a heart attack by about 30%. This little Irish guy was fishing away beneath the ice and all of a sudden this booming voice comes from overhead, "There are no fish beneath the ice." He looks up and asks, "Is that you, God?" "No I'm the manager of the ice rink."

Have 10 to 15 nuts per day, natural nuts, not those salted or roasted variety. The best three are walnuts, macadamias and almonds. Ten to 15 natural nuts per day reduces your risk for a heart attack by 50%. Use extra virgin olive oil; extra virgin olive oil comes from really really ugly olives (that's not true, I made that up). It's the most natural version of olive oil and it's full of antioxidants and it's incredibly good for you. Fruits and vegetables: the Walker suggested dose of fruits and vegetables is 2 or 3 pieces of fruit per day and 3 to 5 servings of vegetables. You say, "that's easy, doc." It might be easy but why do only 1 in

10 of you do that? If people have the 2 or 3 pieces of fruit per day and the 3 to 5 servings of vegetables per day, they have much less heart disease and cancer.

I believe we should be taking high quality vitamins. Don't believe the garbage you hear from the profession about you get all the vitamins you need in your food. These days the food is too processed and packaged and we're losing that nutrition. Basically it's very simple: if you can kill it and eat it straight away or grow it in your back yard, it is good for you. After that all bets are off. Eat less and eat more naturally; that's good quality nutrition.

Number 3 is exercise. All of you people have these couple of things that are working below your hips called your legs; you are, in fact, allowed to use them. I've just come back from the American College of Cardiology meeting in Orlando, Florida. In that huge convection center, there is a set of stairs and there is a set of escalators. You know who was the only idiot walking up the stairs and this is a cardiology conference. I'm walking up the stairs looking at all these cardiologists going up the escalators. Why do people do this? Everything you do has an opportunity for movement. Have regular exercise 4 or 5 times a week for about a half an hour. All you need to do is get up to that slightly short of breath, slightly sweaty stage for about a half an hour 4 or 5 times a week.

Number 4 quitting addictions. You cannot be healthy and smoke. 80% of drug related deaths in our society are due to cigarette smoking. You cannot be healthy and smoke; there is no doubt about it. About a year ago I saw a woman in my practice who is about 38-39. She was telling me about her 42 year-old husband who smoked 20 cigarettes a day. He woke up one night, coughed blood once and six weeks later he was dead from cancer of the lung. Please think seriously about stopping smoking and think seriously about it today, not in 20 years' time.

What about alcohol? Alcohol is also a poison in high doses. The World Health Organization says any more than 4 standard drinks in one night is binge drinking. But there is no doubt that if you are like me and enjoy a couple of glasses of high quality Australian red wine per day, that reduces your risk for heart disease and cancer by 50%.

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There are five caveats: number 1, the Walker suggested dose is 250 milliliters per day; number 2, you do not get double the benefit for double the dose; number 3, you cannot save it all up for Friday night; number 4, I'm not trying to get non drinkers to start drinking, I'm trying to get the heavier drinkers to pull it back to the suggested dose; number 5, one in 20 people in this auditorium, one in 20 people in any society, carries the gene for alcoholism and if you have the gene for alcoholism, you don't drink. You may say, "Hang on a minute, doc, how do I know if I have the gene for alcoholism?" You know, you know and you don't drink.

Number 5 is how we manage this. Stress is easy to summarize in one sentence: it's not the suffering but the way you handle the suffering that's important. You can't see life as something that's dragging you along; you must see life as something you are in control of, taking responsibility for the only thing you can take responsibility for – you.

I want to tell you what I believe to be my most valued achievement. Last year I was giving a road show for one of Australia's major insurance companies so I was away for 3 days. I flew back into Sydney Airport where I live about 45 minutes north of the airport but I had to get off the plane and go south of Sydney to give another talk. I was going to get home about 8 o'clock that night. When I got in about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, I switched on my cell phone and there was a message from my wife that said "ring Ann ASAP." I rang her and said "hat's the problem, darling?" She said "no problem, I'm at the airport." I said "what are you doing at the airport" I'll be home in a few hours." She said, "I couldn't wait." This woman has been putting up with me for 31 years and she couldn't wait the few hours until I got home. That is my most important achievement, more important than anything I have ever done in my life. Put the effort into where it really matters. The Board of Directors will not be standing around your bed when you have your heart attack; they will not be the people crying at your funeral.

Finally I want to tell you what motivates me. Often the worst experiences you have in your life are the most

important teachers. I was fortunate and I was privileged that this happened to me when I was very young. I was 17 years old, one week before my final exams at high school. My best friend and I were going to do medicine together; we had all these plans; we were inseparable mates. My best friend drowned in a swimming pool and I was gone; I had thrown the towel in and I said "that's it for me, I can't practice medicine, I can't do anything, this is hopeless." I was completely and utterly shattered. I went to my friend's funeral. What I didn't count on was my friend's grandfather, a fellow called Sir Lorimer Dodds. Sir Lorimer Dodds was knighted in Australia for his services to medicine; he started the Children's Medical Research Foundation but that wasn't what made him a great man. I met this man he exuded this beautiful peace and wisdom. You forgive a grandfather at his grandson's funeral for wanting to plunge himself into his own grief, but not Sir Lorimer. He stood there with the dignity he always displayed thanking everyone for coming. When I walked up to him, he said, "Ross, I need to speak to you. You and Jack were going to do medicine together and now you have to do it for both of you." Can you imagine at the age of 17 being hit between the eyes with that number? I'm still practicing medicine for two people; I'm still speaking in these wonderful forums for two people; I'm still living for two people and it's a privilege, not a burden. That made me realize is greatness is not the title in front of your name or the degrees after your name or the size of your bank balance or what sort of car you drive; greatness is your ability to touch someone else's life. Greatness is your ability to live your life with a mantra "how may I serve?" The day of my friend's funeral I made a decision to be successful with my life in every aspect of my life. I know that every single MDRT member is successful in their business otherwise you wouldn't be a member of MDRT; but have you made the decision to be successful in your business's greatest asset which is you? If you haven't made that decision, I am asking you to make that decision today because I can tell you your life depends on it.