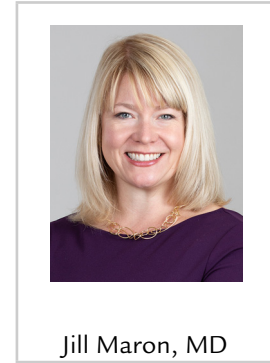




Editorial

Food for Thought: Is a Personalized Diet the Optimal Preventive Medicine?

The adages “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” and “you are what you eat” serve as reminders that the nourishment that we put into our bodies influences our well-being. From the antioxidant effects of blueberries to the benefits of the “good” fat found in avocados, we are taught that the types of foods we eat directly affect our overall health. There is no novelty in this statement. Our ancestors knew that a healthy diet directly affects the body’s ability to fight infection, heal wounds, and live longer. However, the novelty of nutritional science lies in the ways in which nutrition is integrated into personalized medicine to optimize health, with the challenge of delivering optimal nutrition to all patients, regardless of socioeconomic status.



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The ways in which we metabolize and process food are proving to be inherently linked to genetics.¹⁻³ *Nutrigenomics* is a rapidly emerging field that informs diet-related clinical guidelines on the management of patients with an array of cardiovascular and metabolic conditions. These guidelines, in turn, have spawned commercially available genetic-testing platforms that promise personalized nutrition reports based on an individual’s genome (www.genomepalate.com). Macro- and micronutrient needs are assessed at an individual level, and personalized diet plans and recipes are generated to meet these goals. The long-term impact of such strategies, combined with a person’s willingness to adhere to them over time, remains to be seen. Another challenge is the ability of health care systems to provide all patients with access to nutritious food as both a preventive and therapeutic means of combating disease.

Over the past year, *Clinical Therapeutics* has pledged to both consciously address the impact of socioeconomic on access to therapy and disease prevention, as well as to explore nonconventional treatment strategies emerging in the field.⁴ This month, we are thrilled to combine both areas into our specialty Topic Update, Food as Medicine. In our Conversations With the Editor pieces, our readers will learn how the Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance (MANNA) has been feeding the citizens of Philadelphia for nearly 30 years. What started out as a grassroots organization that provided comfort food to patients dying from AIDS has become a trailblazer of nutritional science to treat patients with chronic illnesses across all demographics.⁵ These types of programs combine innovative outreach approaches with emerging science, transforming the ways in which we treat patients with a myriad of diseases.

Throughout this Topic Update, you will find research reviews and original science reports exploring the roles of vitamin D in preventing diabetic neuropathy,⁶ the association of selenium with Crohn disease,⁷ and diet-related considerations in patients with benign colon disorders,⁸ among others. This compilation of articles stresses the importance of nutrition in health, and posits that our individual diets may well serve as our best remedies.

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