



Sharing a Message of Hope and Health in the Latin-American Community

By
May 13 2014

As medical doctors with a passion for human and planetary health, we are always looking for ways to make the greatest difference for the people we serve and the Earth we live on. Starting in 2008, we stumbled upon the fact that animal agriculture contributes 18% of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions. (We later learned that the actual is as high as 51%!) When we realized that we could help our Mother Earth more by stopping our meat consumption than if we stopped using planes, cars, train, and buses, we jumped right onto the veggie wagon! We were working in an underserved area in Mexico when we decided to change our lifestyle completely. It happened in 2010, after a dear mentor gave us *The China Study* to read. We both devoured the book in less than a week, and before we knew it we had made the full switch to a vegan diet. It was easier than we had thought—eating delicious vegan Mexican food was no problem at all, and the health benefits were endless. Joaquin's bad cholesterol (LDL) dropped 56% — a greater reduction than most cholesterol-lowering medications would achieve!

We felt fantastic on our new program, and we felt a responsibility to share this success with our patients. We were eager to empower the reputedly unhealthy Hispanic population with the wonderful news that a simple diet change could help them prevent and reverse most of the chronic medical conditions that cause so much suffering!

The statistics are alarming, especially the ones showing that Latin-American people become obese, diabetic, and hypertensive when they come to the United States. And our youth tend to receive these diagnoses very early in life. Sadly, Mexico now ranks first in obesity. We ask ourselves why, but the answer is no mystery: our poor health originates in every bite we are taking.

When we ask our patients about family health history, we get the same answer: “our ancestors were healthier.” In fact, the ancient Mayans, Aztecs, and other native Mexicans believed that we were made of corn. In a very real sense, they knew that “we are what we eat.” The simple meals of our great grandparents consisted primarily of tortillas, rice, beans, chilies, and salsa (and

little in the way of meats and oils). They also enjoyed the great diversity of fruits and vegetables that grow in our countries, a diet that kept them lean and free of diabetes, high blood pressure, and other degenerative diseases.

Through our [Vegetariano en 21 Dias](#) program, we teach our Spanish-speaking patients that returning to our simple traditional foods is the easy and delicious way to health ... as well as great praise for our ancestors.