



Common Ground: What the World's Top Nutrition Experts Agree On

By Naomi Imatome-Yun
February 25 2016

Some of the world's top nutrition scientists and experts came together at the Oldways Finding Common Ground conference in Boston at the end of last year. The lineup of twenty experts comprised the best of the best, including researchers, scientists, and doctors from Stanford, Harvard, and Cornell Universities. The co-chairs were Dr. Walter Willett of the Harvard School of Public Health and Dr. David Katz, founding director of the Yale Prevention Research Center. Despite widely divergent philosophies ranging from Paleo to vegan to Mediterranean, this array of luminaries reached a consensus on some basic points of healthy eating.

Organized by nutrition nonprofit [Oldways](#), the goal of the conference was to gather the world's top nutrition scientists into one place, let them discuss, and ask them to reach a consensus on good nutrition. Given the current climate of sensationalized media headlines, there couldn't be a better time to cut through all the pseudo-science and nutrition confusion. This confusion helps sell diet pills, plans, and magazines, but it doesn't offer any practical help to people.

It turns out there is a lot of agreement between the world's top nutrition experts, even though they come from very different philosophies and methodologies. Co-chair Dr. Willett [stated](#):

“The foods that define a healthy diet include abundant fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, legumes and minimal amounts of refined starch, sugar and red meat, especially keeping processed red meat intake low. When you put it all together, that's a lot of common ground.”

Besides a plant-centered diet, the scientists and nutrition experts also agreed that sustainability is important:

“Food insecurity cannot be solved without sustainable food systems. Inattention to sustainability is willful disregard for the quality and quantity of food available to the next generation, i.e., our own children.” Even Boyd Eaton, one of the founders of the Paleo diet movement, [stated](#): “Red meat is incompatible with environmental health in a sustainable world. We need a diet that equals the nutrition of our Paleo ancestors, but

is sustainable.”

The expert group also agreed on some other key topics, including these core principles:

- Nutrition advice should be free of politics
- Finding common ground among experts is important for public health
- The basics of good nutrition don't change every time a new study makes the headlines
- Accurate reporting by health journalists is important
- Food literacy is important

Learn more about the Common Ground consensus [here](#).

Scientific Consensus Committee

Steven Abrams, MD, Professor and Chair, Department of Pediatrics, Dell Medical School, University of Texas (Austin, TX)

Sara Baer-Sinnot, President, Oldways (Boston, MA)

Neal Barnard, MD, President, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and Adjunct Associate Professor of Medicine, George Washington University School of

Medicine (Washington, DC)

T. Colin Campbell, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Cornell University and Founder, T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies (Ithaca, NY)

Boyd Eaton, MD, Professor Emeritus, Emory University (Atlanta, GA)

Alessio Fasano, MD, Director, Center for Celiac Research; Chief, Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition and Associate Chief, Department of

Pediatrics, Basic, Clinical and Translational Research, Massachusetts General

Hospital (Boston, MA)

Christopher Gardner, PhD, Professor of Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine (Stanford, CA)

Frank Hu, MD, PhD, Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology, Harvard School of Public Health; Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School (Boston, MA)

David Jenkins, MD, DSc, PhD, Professor, Department of Medicine and Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto; Scientist, Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute of St.

Michael's Hospital; Director, Risk Factor Modification Centre, St. Michael's Hospital

(Toronto, Ontario, CA)

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Tom Kelly, PhD, Chief Sustainability Officer, Sustainability Institute at University of New Hampshire (Durham, NH)

Miguel Ángel Martínez-González, MD, MPH, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health, University of Navarra

(Pamplona, Spain)

Dariush Mozaffarian, MD, DrPH, Dean, Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy (Boston, MA)

Malden Nesheim, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Nutrition and Provost Emeritus, Cornell University (Ithaca, NY)

Dean Ornish, MD, Founder and President, Preventive Medicine Research Institute; Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco (Sausalito,

CA)

Simon Poole, MBBS, DRCOG, Medical Practitioner and Commentator (Cambridge, UK)

Eric Rimm, ScD, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition and Director of the Program in Cardiovascular Epidemiology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public

Health; Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School (Boston, MA)

Joan Sabaté, MD, DrPH, Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology, Loma Linda University School of Public Health (Loma Linda, CA)

Meir Stampfer, MD, DrPH, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School

(Boston, MA)

Antonia Trichopoulos, MD, PhD, President, Hellenic Health Foundation and Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Nutrition at the

School of Medicine, University of Athens (Athens, Greece)

Walter Willett, MD, DrPH, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition; Chairman of the Department of Nutrition, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health; Professor

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