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| Mark: | Welcome to The Health Edge, translating the science of self-care. I am Mark Pettis, and I'm joined, as always, by my great friend and colleague, John Bagnulo. John, good morning, buddy. |
| John: | Good morning, Mark. Good to see you. |
| Mark: | Good to see you, as well. We're here into mid-March, and spring is in the air for sure. A lot going on, as always. Is everything okay in your busy life, John? |
| John: | Yeah, thanks. Everything is going really well. It's busy, but it's great. It's so good, as you mention, to see the change in weather. I mean not that it's been a difficult winter. That's for sure, weather wise. Boy, it's like in the sixties here now. |
| Mark: | Yeah. It's really been an incredible winter. Yeah, I've been busy, as always. Starting a program today at [Corpolo 00:01:04], a center for yoga and meditation where I live in western Massachusetts. It's a program sponsored by the Center for Mind Body Medicine, which you and I have gratefully served on their faculty, and the theme for this weekend, John, is food is medicine in the context of mind and mind. Stuff that we've talked about. It's always a lot of fun, because it tends to draw a lot of behavioral health specialists, clinical social workers, and psychologists, and some psychiatrists, and primary care. |
|  | I jump for joy when I hear a psychiatrist talking about approaches that don't include Zoloft, or Paxil, or Abilify, and the scores of billions that are spent on many of these meds. It's just refreshing to see that there are people in the psychiatry community really reinforcing a much more holistic message around mental health and behavioral health. Nice to see that pendulum swinging, though we still have a lot of work to do. |
| John: | Yeah. That is great. Mark, I know you're certainly a firm believer of the difference that food and dietary choices make on a person's outlook in life. We've talked a little bit about the microbiome. I think that's a great segue into today's talk, which is looking at how some particular chemicals, additives in food, how those have been shown to have influences on a lot of different areas of our body, but certainly on our mind. |
|  | It really started with the Feingold Diet. I'm not sure how many of our listeners are aware of that or are old enough to remember in the early 1970s ... I'm certainly not. I've only looked at the research around it, but in the early 1970s, there was this Feingold Diet, which was an attempt to improve childhood behavior, and kids were put on a completely chemical free diet, no additives, no artificial colorings, or flavorings, or preservatives, and those children's behavior were logged and recorded over the course of several months by their parents, their care providers, if it weren't their parents or their teachers, and it was a noticeable difference. |
|  | This is always kind of pooh poohed I guessed or dismissed by the chemical industry, because they didn't really look at it as a very rigidly controlled clinical study, where people were kept inhouse for a couple months, but, of course, that's not going to happen anyway, so that's really where it all started, with that Feingold Diet, and that was really around behavior, mood, a child's ability to focus, so, yeah, it's a fascinating topic, when you start looking at how the mind is manipulated by different factors, but, when it comes to the diet, I think we're starting to have a pretty good handle on some of them, right? |
| Mark: | Yeah. That's a great historical perspective, John, and as we focus this podcast on some of the more common food additives, which are known ... At least what we know now, and we already to know enough to know that they can be very disruptive, whether it be with how cell divides, and potential cancer risk, how endocrine systems, these endocrine disruptors that wreck havoc with hormonal function, are clearly connected to many of these common food additives. |
|  | Like so much of what we talk about, John, a lot of this falls outside the purview of the FDA. A lot of what we'll be focusing on falls under the category of this GRAS, G-R-A-S, generally regarded as safe, which is this arbitrary, subjective, very nonscientific determination that is actually left to the discretion of the manufacturer to determine. It is sort of the wild west, and continues to be to some extent. Yet, many of the additives that we're going to touch on in this podcast are banned in Europe and most parts of the world. |
|  | It's another I think example, John, of this notion of modern humans, and certainly modern Americans, being the canaries in the coal mine. With each passing generation, as a specie, we're introduced to this array of molecules that are new to nature, that fall under the radar of vigorous oversight, and it can be difficult in any one particular molecule, as we've talked about respect to environmental toxins, to often draw firm cause and effect. Yet, when you're look at the hundreds and hundreds of things that in concert add up to clearly what we know are, not just behavioral issues in kids, as you touched on from ADD and ADHD, to issues of mood and cognition, to anxiety states, to infertility and lower sperm counts, and early puberty. The list continues to grow of these emerging dominant syndromes in young adults and older adults across the age continuum, that clearly, in many profound ways, can be traced to some of the stuff that we're going to be looking at today. |
|  | I think it is a great topic. Before we drill more deeply, John, I wanted to remind the listeners of the podcast that we now have a app in the iTunes App Store. It's a Health Edge app, both for a smart phone, an iPhone, as well as for an iPad, and if any of our listeners want to download that, it's free. They can just go to the App Store at Apple or iTunes. It just keeps the podcast automatically downloaded, and there's a player. Soon there will be one out for ... It will be a Google app for the android users out there. I just wanted to make our listeners aware of that, and, also, to remind them that we're now getting show notes out, which will be posted on our website, HealthEdgePodcast.com, after each podcast, as well as some video on YouTube for those that like the entertainment of how we look early morning. I just wanted to get that in. |
|  | Where to begin, John? As you think about your do not miss food additives, what starts to jump out at you? |
| John: | You and I have talked about this before, Mark. We could spend a whole session on just artificial sweeteners, so I don't know if I want to open up that can of worms, although it would be high on my list of priorities to cover, whether you're talking about historically, aspartame and some of the research around what happens to aspartame at higher temperatures, after it's partially detoxified or metabolized in the body. Some of the things that aspartame degrades into are much more toxic than the aspartame itself. |
|  | Sucralose, which, as you know, Mark, it's goes by the name Splenda, and that's an organochlorine, just by chemical definition when you look at molecule structure. The study done by McNeil Laboratories, who is actually the manufacturer of Splenda, showed that the animals that were put on that, after one month, had much higher rates of neoplasms or growths, cancerous growths. |
|  | It's just hard to choose which one is the most important, but I think I'll leave the artificial sweeteners for a later time, and just give people a general statement that they have a lot more questions about them I think than answers. If we take a look at the animal studies and some of the potential pathways for both of those two really common sweeteners, it's very concerning. There's some great papers that have come from Dr. Blaylock, I believe he's at Mississippi State, which have shown that aspartame, for instance, when we're talking about behavior and the brain, it acts as a very potent excitotoxin, so it stimulates particular pathways within our nervous system that can make it very difficult for some people to focus. It can really work synergistically with other substances, like sugar, to create a higher level of addictiveness or addiction. |
|  | Anyway, to answer your question, Mark, I guess if I had to choose one right now, I would ... Just because I think most people aren't aware of this as an additive, I'm going to go with the broad category of "natural" flavorings. I would put the natural word in quotes, just so that people understand it's anything but natural, and the industry is allowed to get away with this, because, within the food science world, there are numerous ways to label particular ingredients, whether we're talking about monosodium glutamate, or we're talking about particularly, I think, troublesome flavorings and other artificial ingredients, the industry has sometimes two, or three, or even more different ways they can label these things, depending upon the amount of that ingredient that's in a food, the isotope or the form of it. |
|  | When it comes to natural flavorings, I think what I want our listeners to know is that in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, Mark, they're anything but natural. I mean if you took a look at these things on a list, in terms of their chemical trade name, whether it's banana flavoring or strawberry flavoring, they look much more complicated than what you'd see on the back of a paint can, what you'd see on the back of a household cleaning agent. It's really frightening, but, again, these natural flavorings appear in a lot of foods with the label natural, sometimes organic, and, as a consultant, in the past for different food companies who had tried to formulate new products or get away from this, it's amazing at how many of these natural flavorings are in foods that a lot of people would deem very healthy, all natural, and, yet, there is some concern around these natural flavorings when consumed on a low dose chronic basis, how those influence everything from neurological patterns, as we've talked about, to the potential for cancer risk. |
|  | I'm not a person to say the sky is falling with respect to everything in the area of nutrition. I know sometimes if you were to listen to our podcast, Mark, you'd say, "Wow, do these guys find anything to eat," but when you start eating foods that are in bags, in boxes, with significant shelf lives, I think that that's one of the worst directions to go initially, and when you start eating those foods, you're going to inadvertently start to consume a lot of these things that we're talking about, whether it's caramel coloring, which, again, a lot of people look at as a safe, natural ... It's not. I think the European research on caramel coloring, for instance, has shown that it's carcinogenic, and it doesn't have to be one or two high doses to generate that. It's low dose exposure for considerable periods of time. |
|  | I'm going to look at natural flavorings and caramel coloring. I'm going to put those on my list of things to be concerned with, just because they tend to fly under the radar. |
| Mark: | Yeah. That's great, John. One that jumped out for me in beginning to look through this, are the nitrites and the nitrates that we have often talked about. People will find these in processed meats, those meats that, to use your description, John, have longer shelf lives, and have that nice fresh pink color after several weeks of being in the grocery store cooler, but the cured meats: salami, ham, hot dogs. Often when we address controversies with respect to red meats, John, I know that we always emphasize that you really have to segment out these cured processed meats as distinctly different from meats of better quality sources. |
|  | We know that these processed meats have very strong epidemiologic data, and some animal data, and experimental data to suggest much higher cancer risk, particularly gastrointestinal cancer risks. As these nitrites and nitrates bind to proteins, called nitrosamines, we know that these can be carcinogenic. Processed meat should always raise a red flag when I begin to think about food additives. That's a category that I would note. |
| John: | Absolutely, Mark. I think if you're going to go on strict epidemiological evidence, that's the most damning. I think you'd be hard pressed to beat that as the number one public health concern. |
|  | When I was at Chapel Hill, and this was in the early 90s, there was a study that was done, I think it was just before I arrived there, where they looked at red hot dog consumption, and for our listeners that don't know what red hot dogs are ... I grew up in Maine. I think Maine is one of the last two states in the country where red hot dogs are illegal, because they have such a high nitrate content, but in North Carolina, in their School of Public Health, they looked at red hot dog consumption, and they found that children who had more than two red hot dogs a week, had a significantly higher rate of leukemia. Leukemia is the one type of cancer, I believe, that has been tied to nitrate consumption, chronic nitrate consumption, more than any other type of cancer. |
|  | Yeah. That may be the absolute worst and the worst when you look at those, and what those have been shown to do in animal studies. |
|  | I'll, also, just go back with that generally regarded as safe, known as GRAS, G-R-A-S. It's, also, at Chapel Hill, in that School of Public Health, where I learned that GRAS, in many epidemiologists' opinions, should stand for, "Go right ahead, stupid," because it's just such a small amount of I guess you'd say burden of proof is placed on the manufacturer. The whole thing becomes consumer based if you want to try to defeat or get these particular ingredients, to get them looked at more closely, it all comes from consumer watchdog organizations, which there's really not enough of. |
| Mark: | Yeah. As we have referred to, John, in discussions of environmental toxins of other sources, whether it be pesticide residues or plasticizers, like [dysfinalay 00:16:23]. This is sort of death by a thousand cuts, right? You get these low level, chronic exposures of multiple molecules, and so for the human being, for which be a more unique genetic predisposition, an inability to unload or detoxify ... These subtle manifestations of can't concentrate in class, can't sit still, maybe not performing well, maybe someone who is sad or who is fatigued, it's just so easy to attribute these day to day diminished quality of life issues to ultimately diagnoses that most people then begin to attribute to some genetic basis over which they have little control. |
|  | I think what's so insidious about what we're talking about is that these are so pervasive that, in any given moment, one isn't going to notice much. Not much is going to emerge in the realm of consciousness to say, "Wow, this caramel coloring, this pink, processed, cured meat that I'm eating, I don't feel a whole lot different now than I did an hour ago or two hours ago." So much of where they wreck havoc is beneath the level of what we're conscious off, until ultimately we're conscious of something, and then we'll attach a diagnosis to that. Your choice would be Ritalin, an amphetamine, or taking [Ventoria 00:18:03], some of these common food additives, and how can we do that, and work with someone who can help us and eliminate these, and see how we do. |
|  | This is a roll of a dice. This is Russian roulette played out over often many years. |
|  | Preservatives, John, are, also, pretty problematic. I think of BHA, butaylated hydroxyanisole, and BHT, so BHA and BHT are, also, in this GRAS category, even though some toxicology data would suggest a potential carcenogenic cancer risk. We know that these are hormone disruptors, and, again, most processed foods use these preservatives to enhance their self life. |
|  | We talk about endocrine disruption, and, again, for the human being whose endocrine system is being disrupted, that may take the form of infertility or what we call PCOS, polycystic ovarian syndrome. Very common in younger women, who have irregular periods. They are struggling with weight gain. Many of them are insulin resistant, which, as we've often talked about, John, is a metabolic fault line that predicts many quality of life and health risks, to issues of sperm counts in men. |
|  | These are worrisome chemicals, and they're pretty pervasive. |
| John: | Yeah, especially BHT. That's been in breakfast cereals historically, and it is still in some today. It's, also, put in the packaging of others, which sometimes people look at as the packaging is okay. BHT is a very interesting molecule, in terms of, as you mentioned, being a xenoestraglin, and being linked in animal studies, at least, to various forms of cancer and to altered hormone levels, particularly the sex hormones, like you mentioned. |
|  | That would definitely be on the list of those particular letters for people. It is a mouthful to say some of these, whether it's trazamine, being known as yellow number five, or the various abbreviations for these antioxidants that are unlike any of the antioxidants that we naturally get from plants. I think that's a great choice, Mark. |
|  | How about this one, how about if you take a look at another family of ingredients. I know that you know a lot about this from some of your work and lectures you've done on detoxification. What about your parabens, which basically they're petroleum derivatives, right? |
| Mark: | Yeah. |
| John: | They're used in a lot of cosmetics. |
| Mark: | I think parabens is a great category, John. We've talked a lot about that in terms of the cosmetic industry. Another classic example of a pervasive chemical. That, also, falls under this GRAS category, John. People may not realize it. There are parabens in food, propylparaben, often in tortillas, muffins, food dyes, food colorings that you've talked about, John. These are, also, weak synthetic estrogens. Some of the effects that they have, we know, are very much hormonal. There's even some research that I've seen, some of it recent. An author named Wrobel, from Europe, W-R-O-B-E-L, looking at gene expression. We talk a lot about epigenetics, and with these molecular tools now more readily available, you can begin to study this at a level of biologic disruption that historically would have been much more expensive and hard to do. |
|  | We know that gene expression patterns, particularly those that help us defend against a cancer cell, abnormal cell division, has been demonstrated, particularly in breast cancer models, with propylparaben. It's a big concern. A recent study by the Harvard School of Public Health, also, linking propylparaben to infertility in women, and about fifteen percent of couples now are struggling with fertility. It's an astounding figure, John. As you know, and as our listeners know, many couples, as traumatic as it is, to desperately want to have children and start a family, and not be able to do so, is usually raised by a large question mark. People will check for more obvious hormonal issues, endocrine issues, which you never find or rarely find, and often this leads to very expensive interventions, and, yet, it's clear ... I think much of what we have been talking about, historically, John, could very much improve fertility. That's a whole other area where lifestyle medicine, an ancestral lens, could probably help men with their sperm counts, with testosterone levels. Women with estrogen progesterone cycling, and ovulation. |
|  | I think it's clear that many of these things are being disrupted, and propylparaben is a good example of, yet another additive that does that, and, yet, lifestyle and avoidance can fix that. That's another, I think, sort of untold story, as most people, young men and women, throw their hands up and say, "It's something about me that's wrong," as opposed to, "There's something about me that is being hacked by the environment, and maybe if I had some help and knowledge of where to identify those potential sources of that disruption and eliminate them ..." Doctors certainly aren't going to bring people there, in my experience. |
|  | Propylparaben and parabens I think are another good ... Also, the packaging, the processing, all that we've talked about, John, parabens a good example. |
| John: | Yeah, that's true. Just to remind our listeners, Mark, if you apply something topically, just by the nature of our skin and a lot of the other ingredients in some of these, whether it's a moisturizer, a sunscreen, some kind of makeup, those things are going to be delivered systemically. That's certainly going to be the case with parabens. |
|  | Most of these ointments are topically applied items. They're going to contain a certain amount of oil, and it's going to drive whatever it is that's in that particular ingredient, like parabens or nanoparticles, which I would, also, put on this list of things I'm very concerned with, because nanoparticles, for our listeners, they might fall under the umbrella of natural, because let's say it's aluminum. It's a naturally occurring mineral, heavy metal from the earth's crust, and so you could have nanoparticles of aluminum that is part of a sunscreen, that is part of a deodorant, let's say, and those will cross the cell membrane and interfere with the normal cellular processes in a very, very different way than if that particle was not a nano or a very, very small particle. It would require more checks and balances for its delivery into or across the cells. |
|  | I think nanoparticles, they're in a lot of things that people would be very surprised about, Mark, and many of our listeners may be aware of what happened with Crest toothpaste. Dentists were finding these little tiny blue beads in the mouths of their patients all over the country, and when they investigated, it was found that there were nanoparticles of a blue plastic put into Crest to have a higher abrasive or cleaning value for the mouth. That lead to some public outcry with respect to the nanoparticles. They're in everything from toothpaste, to, again, deodorants, to various cosmetics, and they're in our food as well. |
|  | Nanoparticles I just think are a total game changer, whether they are a particular metal, or they are some type of artificial ingredient. I think they have the ability to reach areas of our body and of our physiology that previously would have taken years for them to get to. |
| Mark: | Yeah. Great points, John. We're going to remind our listeners that the Environmental Working Group, EWG.org, and I'll get a link and connect it our podcast, John, for the Environmental Working Group. All that we're talking about, and it is overwhelming when you start looking at the alphabet soup of synthetic chemicals and things that are out there, but EWG has done such a beautiful job of objectively organizing, and communicating, and educating the public with respect to this, and its got great materials that are nicely written, and they have a recent publication, John, of another version of their dirty dozen. We've talked about the dirty dozen in terms of pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables as contrasted with the clean fifteen, and what the Environmental Working Group has done is to sort of identify their dirty dozen of food additives, most of which we have touched on, and a little bit of background information. |
|  | We always come back, right, to this notion, John, that if it's processed and packaged, even though there may be some individuals more resilient than others in their capacity to tolerate, this stuff is going to catch up with you one way or the other, and it's another example of, I think, low hanging fruit for most, when they begin to just consciously identify and avoid, and it's not too hard to do once you start to become more consciously aware of it. |
|  | The Skin Deep database is a nice database with respect to the cosmetics and health products that are out there, John, from the toothpaste, to the deodorants, to all the stuff that's out there, huge industries, shampoos. They, also, have, just while on this train of thought, John, some great apps that people can download. One that I really like is called Food Scores, and Food Scores is ... I'm not aware of anything quite like it, John. They've developed a database of now eighty thousand foods, and they have a very simple system. Green is go for it. Yellow, maybe a little caution. Red, definitely want to avoid, and additives are one of the metrics that they're using to determine that, as well as genetic modification, and so people, I think, can quickly get a sense of where a particular product might be. |
|  | There's a bar code scanner on the app, so if you're in your local drugstore, and you're about to buy a shampoo or some makeup, toothpaste or an Oscar Meyer hot dog, you can scan that, and the Food Score will ... It's really a great user friendly tool that, at the point of decision making, can help you determine ... It's free, and I often recommend ... I use it a lot myself. It's informative. |
| John: | Before people maybe get to that point, Mark, and I know we've talked about this in past programs that we've taught, one way we can do our best is to stay outside of the that quagmire that you can fall into when you're in the inner aisles of a grocery store, or a health food store, or wherever it is you go, stay in the outside. Stay within the produce, the seafood, the meat, the dairy aisles, and that's a really good start, because most of these things we're talking about, the more troublesome ones, are going to fall, as you just said, in your packaged and processed foods that have significant shelf lives, or what to have some kind of market appeal with either a different color, to children especially. |
|  | I think it's terrible the way that food manufacturers really try to prey on the things that grab a kid's attention. Sugar, obviously, is going to be at the top of the list, but then, after that, if they're not putting a prize in a box of cereal, or they're not putting some kind of animated figure on things to catch people's attention, then they're making them some kind of bright, exciting color. |
|  | It's really, food h as become ... Unfortunately, it's become much more than just taste and quality. It's become how can we get people to come back to this, of all ages, across the life span, time and time again? What is it that will keep them addicted? That will keep them visually interested? It's somewhat of a game, but if you stay out of those aisles, right, if you stay within the produce section, your seafood section, your dairy section, you can do really well. We have obviously other concerns with things that are entirely grain fed, and with the pesticides, but I've always said to people, Mark, especially people who say, "Look, I have limited income. I can't buy everything organic, or that's grass fed." I'll say, "Look, if you stay to the outside of the grocery store, you're going to really minimize your exposure to a lot of the worst of the worst ingredients. Corn syrup, things like that, are all found on those inner aisles. The outside and maybe GMO ... It may have glyphostes in it. It maybe feed lot raised, whether it's yogurt, but, hey, you're taking a step in the right direction. |
|  | I know for some of our listeners, Mark, as you mentioned, this is overwhelming, and I always say just try to get on the path. If you are concerned with already being there, in just a short period of time, that's going to be perpetual frustration, because I mean I look at the things that I feel myself and my family are exposed to, despite all of my knowledge, and it's daunting. It's almost impossible now in the world we live in, to get rid of everything that has been shown, in one way or another, to cause issues for human health. I mean I'm here in Ohio, and if you take a look at glyphosate use, which is ... Again, round up for our listeners. Glyphosate use is ... You're talking hundreds of millions of pounds now are thrown down on a yearly basis in the mid-west and a lot of other areas of the country, and it's probably in a lot of our drinking water. It's everywhere, and so you can't be overwhelmed with fear by these things. You just got to do the best you can. |
|  | Again, if our listeners stay to the outside of a grocery store, then additives, whether they're artificial or natural, become a thing of the past. I think that's always the best way to go initially. |
|  | Mark, I wanted to add one thing. You mentioned this wonderful app that the Environmental Working Group has. I think that's a great resource, and if people want an at home resource, actual hard copy, paperback, there's a great book. It was one of the first books that I ever had or invested in. I was just out of high school. Now I think the guy's on his fourth or fifth edition, but it's called Diet for a Poisoned Planet. The author's name is David Steinman, and he's taken all of the FDA, USDA data, CDC stuff, and he's looked at the relationship between a lot of these ingredients and chemicals, pesticides, as well as additives, and how those have been shown to influence human health. He's got a great analysis of each one, and he, also, has red light, yellow light, green light foods, whether you're talking about additives, or you're looking at particular members of the produce family, or particular species of fish which have been shown to have high levels of environmental toxins. That's Diet for a Poisoned Planet by David Steinman. I highly recommend it. |
| Mark: | Yeah. That's a great recommendation, John. Yeah. He's [inaudible 00:35:13] in some of that early work. Before we wind down here in these last few minutes, John, you brought up so much great stuff in what you were sharing. I've come to appreciate, I've come to appreciate, in my own self-care, John, and in my own knowledge and practice, of behavioral economics, this notion that marketing and advertisement is explicitly designed to get into the brains of the homo sapien, the modern human, and to draw them in. |
|  | What we know from a lot of the neuro science is that much of this is happening beneath the level of consciousness, whether it's being drawn to a color, or an attractive image, or location, all of that is carefully choreographed. People often think that free will is the basis upon which they're about to choose, and a good case can be made that what we experience or perceive as free will, can be heavily influenced beneath the level of consciousness, whether it's foods that are addicting, all the stuff that we've talked about, John, but the architecture ... |
|  | Richard Thaler, another behavioral economist, published a book a couple years ago called Nudge, N-U-D-G-E, and it's this notion of architecture. The way that our stores are designed, the way that our communities are designed, the way that our workplaces are designed, the way that our houses and cupboards are populated, will influence more than anything how we end up choosing. Industry has so insidiously infiltrated our environment with a choice architecture that will tend to enhance the likelihood of purchasing their product. You have to applaud any industry for doing that. That's their mission in life, and, yet, for the consumer, if you're not aware of how that's impacting how you think and how you interpret, and how you respond, you can find yourself choosing much less consciously than you think you are. |
| John: | Millions of people, Mark, are being funneled into certain choices. I always use the analogy, and I know it always has to come back to some kind of either farm or animal analogy with me, but if you've ever driven out west, you've seen those huge ranges where the cattle are truly free range. When it's time for them to be rounded up and harvested or to be processed, those animals go through these incredible mazes of corrals, and fencing that two or three guys on horseback or now probably on some kind of four wheeler ATV, can get these thousands of animals to go into these feed lots for finishing, or to go onto a truck to be transported to the slaughter house. |
|  | It's a pretty grim picture, but in terms of the choices humans are making, Mark, it's very analogous to that. I mean people are being herded by marketing, by just the over sugar content of things, and the addictiveness of them, and a lot of people are going from what could be potentially a grass fed free range existence, to one that is basically feed lot based, and the outcomes, unfortunately, for animals' health or for our own health, are very similar. |
|  | Absolutely. I always ask people to really question anything that ... We've said this a lot, Mark, anything that's going to tell you it's cholesterol free, it's low fat, it's X, Y or Z. If it's got those kind of claims on it, it's not something you're going to find on the outside of the grocery store. It's not something that's perishable. It's usually something that's going to take you down the wrong road. It's just the best starting point, right? Stay away from labels. Stay away from things that are trying to make some kind of health claim on them. |
|  | There's exceptions. Of course, we have our particular ... Whether it's a supplement, or a type of oil, like coconut oil. I know that Dr. Bronner's extra virgin coconut oil, they got taken to task by the FDA, because they were citing research on their coconut oil label which showed how coconut oil had been used very favorably in Alzheimer's interventions and things like that, so I think the FDA came down on them hard for that, and that would be an exception, where it's very unique to see a coconut oil product actually citing scientific research on it. |
|  | But, by and large, I think things, ingredients, whether it is some type of cholesterol lowering gum in a margarine substitute, which gums, we didn't even get into things like carrageenan, which now are becoming more than just suspicious, if you look at the research on that, how they affect the microbiome or the gut health. |
|  | I think we really just want to stay away from boxes and bags, and try to keep things real perishable in the diet. |
| Mark: | Yeah. Carrageenan is a great thing that you bring up, John. This is an emulsifier. It adds some texture, and, again ... |
| John: | It's a lot of inorganic products. Most people don't understand how is it that carrageenan has been shown at the University of Eastern Illinois to cause intestinal inflammation and things like that, and, yet, it's inorganic ingredients, because Organic Valley, which is, by and large, a pretty good company, Organic Valley Dairy Products, like their heavy whipping cream and things like that, contained carrageenan, because it's allowed, because it's manufactured from seaweed. It's allowed in inorganic products. |
|  | Again, this can be very daunting for our listeners who hear the words Organic Valley, and they're like, "Wow, so here's an organic product that you guys have a problem with." There isn't really one label we can give, whether it's organic or natural, that's going to always work. It's going to really have to come down to just a more educated decision, looking at the ingredients, and not getting pulled in by the word organic. I think that's another example is on a lot of breakfast cereals that have thirty grams of sugar, and have these natural flavorings in them, and things like that. |
|  | It's daunting, and I feel fortunate that, at this age now, this has been a lifelong commitment, and commitment both in education, as well as applying it personally. I feel really fortunate that I'm here, and I always feel very empathetic, as I know you do, Mark. You work with a lot of different populations, where there just isn't enough time in the day for some of these people. There isn't enough money in the account to, in their opinion, purchase some of these foods that are sometimes much more expensive than the corn syrup laden ones, which are pennies per hundred calories. |
|  | It's a mine field, but, again, I say just do your best to establish a more local food supply with a farmer's market. You guys got some great resources down in the Berkshires, right. I forget the name of the place. Just up the road from yourself, Mark, that has all the organics from the local farms, but do you best to just stick with produce, and seafood, and higher quality dairy products, and meat, if the person chooses to eat it, eggs, and just stay the hell out of the those middle aisles, and things start to go in the right direction. |
| Mark: | Yeah. That's a perfect way to wind this down, John. It does give me hope, daunting and overwhelming as it is, that consumer demand is, I think, greater than ever. You're seeing healthier choices show up in places that historically you'd never expect to see them, and I think a lot of this, John, is about consciousness. |
|  | We will put a link on for the Environmental Working Group. They, also, have a nice resource, Healthy Eating on a Tight Budget, which I use a lot, John, in some of the under-served folks that we chat to. You meet people where they're at, and you do the best you can with every choice you make to be as conscious as you can with respect to that choose. I don't think there's anymore anyone could do to just try to navigate as effectively as a steward as one can. |
|  | It was good to look at a list of some do not miss food additives that can problematic for folks, John. We remind folks to check us out on iTunes, and if folks like the podcast, we appreciate maybe a vote of endorsement or a comment, as we continue to get the word out and bringing the power back to the people. As always, John, it's a pleasure. Thank you for sharing. |
| John: | Likewise, buddy. Great being with you, and have a great weekend. |
| Mark: | Yeah, you as well, John. |