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The Tenacity of Science Part 3 of 4 September 2016

"The one unchanging fact of science is that it is always incomplete, and quickly obsolete."
Guy Consolmagno, PhD, Director of the Vatican Observatory, July 2016.

First, early May, it was sodium

The highly-esteemed, peer-reviewed, UK publication The Lancet published Canadian clinical research (McMaster University) entitled Salt - too much or too little?, which concluded "Low-salt diets may not be beneficial for everyone and may even increase the risk of cardiovascular disease". The article provoked such a global outcry that the editors issued a statement of defence: "When apparent dogma is challenged, we should speak not of controversy, but rather accede to the all-encompassing expression of so-called scientific uncertainty, so as to avoid unbecoming rhetoric. […] The corollary that reducing sodium intake across populations will be beneficial to all, has been challenged with the assertion that doing so might indeed be harmful."

Then, late May, it was fat

The USA's Nutrition Facts Panel (NFP) has undergone a major makeover.

The first revision in 20+years, the changes are beyond skin deep. The revised graphics are designed to illustrate a number of significant changes to Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015 ("the Nation's go-to source for nutrition advice") the most fundamental of which is the direction for Americans to increase the proportion of daily calories derived from fat.

This just in....

This week, the FDA expanded the definition of the term "healthy" to include foods that are not low fat (≤ 3 g fat per serving), but that have a dominant monounsaturated/ polyunsaturated fat profile, and, at least 10% DV of either Vitamin D or potassium.

☼ Big Fat Flip Flop

Saturated Confusion, in Food Technology (08.16), by Roger Clemens (a member of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee), cites a litany of some of the statistics put to the nutritionists who came out swinging in favour of fat, and in some cases, saturated fat. Scrutiny of nine publications covering 15 countries, 600,000 subjects and 6.5 million person years, revealed that butter consumption was not directly related to CVD and was inversely related to diabetes. A meta-analysis of 21 studies (2010) and a further meta-analysis of 72 studies (2014) found no association between saturated fat intake and the risk of CVD. The Committee concluded that the evidence no longer supports a low-fat diet recommendation.

☼ Other Regulatory & Health Authorities

In February 2012, Health Canada approved the health claim Replacement of Saturated Fat with Mono- and Polyunsaturated Fat and Blood Cholesterol Lowering, based on the Institute of Medicine 2002 study of the same conclusion, supplemented with additional research provided by the petitioner. In spring of this year, the British government established a scientific advisory committee to review the evidence for the relationship between saturated fats and health and make recommendations. (Are you with me?)

☼ We haven't heard the final word

All charged with the task of forging a new NFP, dietary recommendations, a health claim, above all, the definition of "healthy", have acted in good faith. Nevertheless, as frankly put in A Big Fat Dispute "Adoption of low-fat and fat-free dietary patterns and foods has been a health and nutrition failure". While the professionals continue to debate how much and what kind of fat we should eat, market data indicates that, as consumers pursue a "clean label", an increase in consumption of butter, cheese, full-fat milk, even bacon has ensued. Better flavour and texture, alone, are strong loyalty factors. **FF**