

Published by

HEALTHY CHOICES FOR MIND AND BODY

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Rantings and Ravings - Oat Bran Defiled (06/2005)

You may not remember the newspaper headlines about oat bran in 1990, but I do. They planted the seed for this newsletter. A lone, miniscule study generated the irresponsible conclusion and headlines that oat bran had no effect on cholesterol levels.

What **arrogance** to say that one measly, negative study overturns reams of positive research with which it happens to conflict. I was infuriated. After huge efforts to get people to eat more foods with soluble fiber, this one article slammed the oat-bran cookbook in our faces.

Mind you, this was no back-section food article. The front-page banner headline led to hours of calming indignant patients; explaining the vagaries of medical research; and cajoling people to resume their oatmeal. The pipsqueak upstart study happened to have Harvard credentials and appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine, so publicity flowed. Unfortunately, no one seemed to have read it.

A mere *twenty* individuals, all *healthy dietitians* (presumably they know how to eat???) with *low-normal cholesterol levels(!!!)* ate either a huge amount (85 grams per day) of oat bran or low fiber wheat with their usual diets. But they *didn't* eat their usual diets, since they were eager-to-prove-what-pristine-diets-they-eat dietitians. They ate less saturated and more poly-unsaturated fat. Both not-so-typical diets affected cholesterol similarly. So big deal.

They proved *only* that enough oat bran to plug a drain does not beat normal cholesterol levels even lower in people who eat prudent diets. Who in their right mind would say that thin, healthy people with normal cholesterol levels have the same type of metabolism as an obese, cholesterol-clogged, double-cheeseburger glutton? Don't they know that people have different types of metabolisms (metaboli?) that require different dietary approaches? Even the FDA gets it and still allows good ole' Quaker to say, "Oatmeal helps remove cholesterol."

There. It may have taken me 15 years to respond, but I've stewed long enough.