

Young People Want to Understand Nutrition

October 13, 2013

Judging from the packed-room attendance at the workshops I moderated today, future doctors of America want to learn about nutrition. These high school and undergraduate students were informed, have great questions and are seeking schools where they can learn more.

UC Davis, along with a number of major physician organizations, sponsored the 11th Annual UC Davis Pre-Medical and Pre-Health Professions National Conference. It is a professionally done, student-run conference for students with aspirations of becoming doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and public health officers. The conference offered over 200 workshops providing information about medical school curricula, admission requirements, financial aid, MCAT preparation, public policy and clinical and research opportunities.

I had hoped that my workshop would address the way in which nutrition and metabolism is integral to all of health and medicine, and should be taught as part of every discipline and organ system. I think I made the point, no one was arguing with me and I really didn't want to lecture, so I opened the discussion up to questions.

Most of the questions didn't have anything to do with medical school curriculum. They just wanted to know about nutrition. Some students had rather obvious biases about "good" and "bad" nutrition, so I tried to show them that every issue in nutrition and metabolism has multiple nuanced aspects, which aren't really appropriate for blanket generalities. So I answered tons of questions, usually turning ones they thought were simple into multi-level discussions. They need to know that we don't have all the answers yet, and that one study never gives a global, final answer.

What I couldn't tell them is a list of schools where nutrition education is emphasized and fully integrated

into the curriculum. Medical schools don't teach nutrition that way, at least not yet.