



Date: June 16, 2015

Subject: Status of Vegetarian Nutritional Science in PNWU Curriculum

Dear Amanda Strombom, Stewart Rose and Vegetarians of Washington:

I am writing this letter in response to your letter to our university president, Dr. Keith Watson, dated May 18, 2015.

I appreciate your concerns about nutrition and specifically vegetarian nutrition education in medical schools. As a former clinical nutritionist, and a current medical educator, teaching nutrition and its benefits is very important to me personally and professionally. I am very thankful that PNWU-COM recognizes the value of nutrition and wellness, and chose to hire someone like me as part of their founding faculty – not many medical schools have someone with my credentials and experience as part of their full-time faculty.

Nutrition overall is taught in very limited fashion in most medical school curricula both in the US and in Europe.¹⁻⁴ A recent survey of osteopathic medical schools found they required 17 hours (SD \pm 12.5 hours).⁵ Allopathic medical schools have also recently been found to require just 10.0 hours of nutrition education (SD \pm 13.7 hours; median of 17 hours).⁶ With recent curricula adjustments, PNWU-COM now provides approximately 25 hours of nutrition-related content during the first 2 years of education.

Nutrition education at PNWU-COM provides students a broad base – from general nutrient metabolism and lifecycle nutrition; the benefits of physical activity and how to help patients make successful lifestyle behavior changes; the benefits and research behind vegetarian, Mediterranean, and DASH diets; to the key lifestyle principles aimed at disease prevention and management. We also emphasize the importance of working within a patient's cultural, familial, socio-economic background and food preferences for optimal weight and health achievement as an essential part of the physician-patient partnership. Lastly, we attempt to provide this nutrition and wellness education despite the low emphasis on board exams (COMLEX and USMLE) because we know that nutrition and related issues are frequently encountered problems our future physicians will need to be ready to handle in the clinic.



Thank you again – it is good to know you are reaching out to all medical schools in our region with these important concerns.

Sincerely,

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cc: Dr. Mary Johnson, Dr. Tom Scandalis, Dr. Keith Watson, Ms. Vikki Gore, Ms. Vicky Koch

Citations

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3. Chung M, van Buul VJ, Wilms E, Nellessen N, Brouns FJ. Nutrition education in European medical schools: results of an international survey. *Eur J Clin Nutr.* 2014;68(7):844-846.
4. Morris NP. The neglect of nutrition in medical education: a firsthand look. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2014;174(6):841-842.
5. Briggs Early K, Adams KM, Kohlmeier M. Analysis of Nutrition Education in Osteopathic Medical Schools. *Journal of Biomedical Education.* 2015.
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