It Tastes so Good, but Is It Poisoning Your Loved Ones?

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- A documentary film by Jeffrey Smith and Amy Hart shows the dramatic effects an organic diet can have on those with chronic conditions
- Prenatal exposure to ambient pesticides has been linked to autism spectrum disorder with comorbid intellectual disability
- Infertility and precocious puberty may improve with an organic diet
- Glyphosate depletes important nutrients in humans, plants and animals that eat the plants
- Even nonfood crops like cotton are now sprayed with dangerous chemicals, and 300 million acres worldwide now have herbicide-resistant weeds

This article was previously published May 18, 2019, and has been updated with new information.

For years I have advocated for an organic diet to maximize your health, so you can avoid many health problems and help the environment. Choosing organic foods reduces your exposure to pesticides, herbicides and dangerous genetically engineered (GE) foods, which comprise almost all nonorganic foods and are typically unlabeled.

In addition to protecting the environment, buying organic also supports animal welfare, sustainable farming and sustainable farmers.

Now, a powerful documentary, “Secret Ingredients," follows the lives of several families who suspect their health problems are caused by their nonorganic diets, and who subsequently embrace an organic diet, free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and chemicals.

The dramatic recoveries documented from conditions like chronic pain, asthma, autism spectrum diseases and fertility problems are truly inspiring and should convince everyone to start eating organic. While the free preview of the movie is no longer available, you can stream it from the movies website at secretingredientsmovie.com.

One Family's Story

"Secret Ingredients" begins with the story of Kathleen DiChiara and her family. Kathleen had been a triathlete until waking up one day in her 30s with sudden neuropathy. After a failed surgery, Kathleen experienced paralysis, chronic pain syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), fibromyalgia and myofascial pain syndrome and became so disabled she lost her career.

At the same time that she was battling the sudden onset of these disabling conditions, Kathleen's first son Stephen was diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder (PDD) at an early age — an autism spectrum disorder. The PDD included sensory processing disorder, a digestive disorder, a language disorder and selected mutism, says DiChiara. Footage shows an active little boy who has no ability to communicate with words and must point and grunt to convey his thoughts and wishes.

DiChiara's second son, Camden, born soon after, also had serious health problems. He was born with asthma so severe the family had to rent a nebulizer, a machine that turns liquid medicine into a mist, to be ready for his frequent attacks. Camden also had a severely bloated stomach, constipation, mood swings, irritability and rashes.

More Family Woes Lead to New Awareness

The DiChiara family’s woes continued. DiChiara's third son, Treyson, was born with severe rashes, eczema and allergies. The rashes and inflammation behind his knees were so severe they were bleeding.In addition to herself and her three sons, new chronic health problems also appeared in her husband Stephen, who in his 40s was diagnosed with a benign breast tumor condition called gynecomastia.

At this point, DiChiara began to suspect something the family was eating was contributing to the scourge of chronic diseases. Moreover, she saw the futility of her family leading a healthy lifestyle if it was undermined by harmful food. She also saw how many other parents and children she knew were experiencing similar chronic health problems despite their pursuit of healthy lifestyles and believing they were eating nutritiously.

She resolved to research the possible causes of the family's many health problems and began to assiduously study holistic nutrition, eventually becoming a functional diagnostic nutritionist (FDN-P). Because of the severity of her first son’s condition, DiChiara focused on the biochemistry behind autism and how

food chemicals break down in the body. In fact, she says, autism was "my greatest teacher about the human system and its interaction with food."

Clues to the Autism Epidemic

Almost everyone is now aware of the autism epidemic. When I was in medical school more than 30 years ago, the incidence of autism was 1 in 10,000, whereas today 1 in 44 of America's 8-year-olds are on the autism spectrum, according to CDC statistics.[1] It is not only the U.S. that is experiencing such shocking rates.

From my perspective, there are many potential and sometimes interacting factors that are contributing to the astounding rise in autism spectrum disorder. They include vaccine adjuvants, especially when combined with genetic predispositions, microbial toxins like mold, prenatal vitamin D deficiencies and even electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure.

But topping the list of suspected factors may well be GMO foods and the agricultural chemicals like glyphosate, pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers used to grow them — including chemicals lurking in biosolids which are now used widely on food crops.

A 2019 article in BMJ titled "Prenatal and Infant Exposure to Ambient Pesticides and Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children: Population Based Case-Control Study" confirmed some disturbing links:[2]

"Findings suggest that an offspring's risk of autism spectrum disorder increases following prenatal exposure to ambient pesticides within 2000 m of their mother's residence during pregnancy, compared with offspring of women from the same agricultural region without such exposure. Infant exposure could further increase risks for autism spectrum disorder with comorbid intellectual disability."

Clues to Hormonal Conditions

Several parents appearing in "Secret Ingredients" suffered from hormone-related conditions, most experiencing dramatic improvements after adopting diets of organic food. Mia, for example, had undergone two miscarriages but when put on an organic diet, delivered a healthy baby.

The hormone conditions people in the documentary say they experienced — the gynecomastia suffered by DiChiara's husband, and a woman's 8-year-old daughter who developed breasts at age 8 — are no surprise when looking at the

chemicals used in nonorganic food. A 2018 article in Food and Chemical Toxicology confirms the breast cancer links of the widely-used glyphosate commonly known as Roundup:[3]

"Previous studies showed that glyphosate stimulates breast cancer cell growth via estrogen receptors. The present study investigated the effect of glyphosate on the estrogen signaling pathway involved in the induction of cholangiocarcinoma (CCA) cell growth …

The effects of glyphosate on cell growth, cell cycle and molecular signaling pathways were measured. The results showed that HuCCA-1 cells expressed [in] estrogen receptor alpha … The data from this study indicate that glyphosate can induce cell growth in ERα positive CCA cells through non-genomic estrogen receptor/ERK1/2 signaling pathway."

In 2018, the journal Clinical Nutrition ESPEN reported that the widely-used herbicide glyphosate inhibits[4] "aromatase that turns androgens to estrogens." Another effect of glyphosate's disrupting effect on hormones is "weak androgens and estrogen depletion coherently explain white matter asymmetry and dysconnection in autism," says the journal.

Say No to Glyphosate

Some of you may be too young to remember the scandal surrounding DDT, an organochlorine insecticide used widely on U.S. crops until its deadly effects on animals and the environment surfaced, which led to it being banned.[5]

Glyphosate, which GMOs are designed to withstand, is the DDT of our era, and as the full effects of its toxicity continue to become evident I hope it will likewise be banned. As noted in the documentary, chemical companies like Monsanto/Bayer make plants resistant to the poison of glyphosate so they can sell more.

Glyphosate has been linked to autism, endocrine derangement and fertility problems as well as digestive problems, allergies and more — many of which are described in "Secret Ingredients." It compromises the human microbiome, which in turn can influence the brain and mood, immunity and body weight, says neurologist Dr. David Perlmutter.

Glyphosate has been used so indiscriminately, it has defeated its own purpose Jeffrey M. Smith, founder of Institute for Responsible Technology, says in the documentary. There are now 300 million acres of herbicide-resistant weeds

leading to more glyphosate use and the use of other, even more toxic herbicides, says Smith.

As noted in the film, even crops that are not GMOs, such as wheat, are sprayed with glyphosate before harvest. Cotton crops are also sprayed with glyphosate, which means things like bandages and even tampons may be a source of exposure.

Glyphosate Depletion of Nutrients

Glyphosate depletes and makes unavailable important nutrients in the human body, which could explain its links to so many diseases. A 2015 article in Surgical Neurology International states:[6]

"Manganese (Mn) is an often overlooked but important nutrient, required in small amounts for multiple essential functions in the body. A recent study on cows fed genetically modified Roundup(®)-Ready feed revealed a severe depletion of serum Mn. Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup(®), has also been shown to severely deplete Mn levels in plants.

Here, we investigate the impact of Mn on physiology, and its association with gut dysbiosis as well as neuropathologies such as autism, Alzheimer's disease (AD), depression, anxiety syndrome, Parkinson's disease (PD), and prion diseases. Glutamate overexpression in the brain in association with autism, AD, and other neurological diseases can be explained by Mn deficiency.

Mn superoxide dismutase protects mitochondria from oxidative damage, and mitochondrial dysfunction is a key feature of autism and Alzheimer's. Chondroitin sulfate synthesis depends on Mn, and its deficiency leads to osteoporosis and osteomalacia. Lactobacillus, depleted in autism, depend critically on Mn for antioxidant protection.

Lactobacillus probiotics can treat anxiety, which is a comorbidity of autism and chronic fatigue syndrome. Reduced gut Lactobacillus leads to overgrowth of the pathogen, Salmonella, which is resistant to glyphosate toxicity, and Mn plays a role here as well. Sperm motility depends on Mn, and this may partially explain increased rates of infertility and birth defects."

Glyphosate: A Probable Carcinogen

In 2015, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer reclassified glyphosate as a probable human carcinogen and since then,

disturbing findings continue to be reported. But the problem in getting at the true dangers is the same as we see with Big Pharma and other influential industries.

"Research" is funded by the companies making the product, academics are paid large sums to defend the safety of those products and incriminating research is buried. Here is how BMJ described the problem in getting a true picture of the dangers of glyphosate:[7]

"Undisclosed industry involvement has emerged in evaluations by EFSA, the UN's Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Lobbying by industry was widespread and well documented. Although it is difficult to quantify, lobbying probably influenced the outcome of some of these evaluations and media coverage and led U.S. government officials to question supporting the IARC/WHO."

A Happy Ending for the DiChiara Family

After six months of eating organic foods and removing all pesticides, chemicals and GMOs from their diet, the DiChiara family's health conditions rapidly improved. "Within a few weeks, we had significant changes and each symptom in each individual improved," says DiChiara of her family's switch to eating organic.

"It was in short time relative to how long we suffered," she says. After six months the family's conditions and symptoms had all but disappeared. We are taking ourselves "out of the human experiment," says DiChiara emphatically. Other families and children shown in the documentary also achieved miraculous results once they went organic and got the toxins out of their diet.

Yet, toxic food is everywhere and is actually the norm. "It is hard to believe that food that looks so good and tastes so good can be bad for you," DiChiara muses toward the end of the documentary, adding that even though organic food is slightly more expensive, it is much less expensive than treating the chronic diseases stemming from toxic food.

One take-home message from this excellent documentary is that consumers must look for not just one but two labels on any food they buy. The non-GMO label is valuable, of course, but it does not necessarily mean the food was not sprayed with chemicals before harvest. Food must also carry the U.S. 100% Organic label for consumers to be assured of their purity.

Sources and References

- [1] CDC March 31, 2022
- [2] BMJ 2019; 364 doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l962
- [3] Food Chem Toxicol. 2018 Aug;118:595-607. doi: 10.1016/j.fct.2018.06.014
- [4] Clin Nutr ESPEN. 2018 Feb;23:171-183. doi: 10.1016/j.clnesp.2017.10.005
- [5] U.S. EPA Report July 1975
- [6] Surg Neurol Int. 2015 Mar 24;6:45. doi: 10.4103/2152-7806.153876
- [7] BMJ 2019; 365 doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l1613