

“FED UP,” THE DOCUMENTARY
Review by David G. Schwartz, M.D.
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This video, as well as Dr. Robert Lustig’s book, Fat Chance, contributed information for last month’s article, “Homicide by Sugar.” This article is a more in depth report on the movie. Then, next month I plan to review Dr. Lustig’s book more completely.

The executive producers are Katie Kouric, well-known newscaster and narrator of this video, and Laurie David, producer of “An Inconvenient Truth.”

The movie gathers data from many sources and interviews many contributors, including former President Bill Clinton, former FDA Commissioner Dr. David Kessler, former Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona, former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, Drs. Robert Lustig and David Ludwig, referred to in last month’s article, Dr. Mark Hyman, director of Functional Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic and author of Eat Fat, Get Thin, Michael Pollan, author of many books about food, including Food Rules, which I reviewed in a previous article, Gary Taubes, author of Why We Get Fat and What To Do About It, as well as many other authoritative sources.

As mentioned last month, Dr. David Kessler states that for the first time in history, more people will die worldwide from obesity than of starvation. I would add that obesity is not evidence of an abundance of food, but very often is a result of food scarcity and food insecurity, lacking options for variety and for nutritious food. This is like dying of thirst in the middle of the ocean, if the only food available is processed food and sugar. Dr. Robert Lustig states that 75% of all health care dollars is spent on maintenance and treatment of diseases of metabolism, that is, obesity, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and their consequences. Obesity is now catching up with smoking as causing cancer.

As explained in last month’s article, weight gain or loss is not simply the balance of calories taken in with calories burned, because certain foods turn on genes that change metabolism to cause weight gain, so then, “a calorie is not a calorie.”

How did all this, “calories in, calories out,” concept begin to be established in mainstream thinking?

In 1953, exercise was first being accepted as beneficial for health. Dr. Jean Meyer, and expert on obesity, did a mouse study showing the effects of exercise on preventing obese mice. The insane mantra, “eat less, exercise more,” started then, beginning the “fitness revolution,” fixated on exercise to keep thin, for the next several decades. From 1980 to 2000, gym membership doubled, and so did obesity. What went wrong? Exercise has many health benefits, reducing risk of much chronic disease, including metabolic syndrome, but don’t count on it for weight loss. Margo Wootan, Director of Nutrition Policy for the Center for Science in the Public Interest states, “We are not going to exercise our way out of the obesity problem.” One would have to bike 1½ hrs to burn the calories of a 20 oz. Coke, and swim 1 1/3 hrs to burn the calories of a medium serving of

French fries. People have suffered from much calorie restriction and exercise, frustrated that it doesn't work in the long run, and they have blamed themselves and have lost much self-esteem from this problem.

If dieting and exercising could prevent weight gain or cause weight loss, where has decades of diets and exercising got us by now? In the words of a former vice presidential candidate, "How's that bein' fer ya?" If that could work, we wouldn't be where we are today. Yet the food industry, politicians, and much of the general public continue to say that it's your own fault if you're obese.

Dr. Robert Lustig, as explained in last month's article, makes it clear that "a calorie is not a calorie." Some calories, from junk food, by way of changing metabolism, make you fat, and other calories from whole food, does not. Gary Taubes, author of Why We Get Fat, says, "A whole generation of kids are torturing themselves, doing their best to do the cure that we tell them, and it's the wrong cure, and we are blaming the willpower and moral fortitude of these kids, and it's a crime."

Dr. Lustig remarks that sugar is a poison, dose dependent, chronically, not acutely. Too much sugar in any form is dangerous, whether pure sugar or whether processed starch that turns to sugar in the G.I. tract. That goes for fruit juices as well as other sweetened beverages. There are 600,000 kinds of food items available, and 80% of them have added sugar. He says that gluttony and sloth are the result of biochemistry, not the cause. Sugar causes a rise in insulin, which makes you hungry. Too much sugar makes you feel tired and not feeling like exercising.

This movie portrays the sad, frustrating lives of extremely obese children, the ostracism, the self-blaming, the loss of self-esteem, exactly like someone addicted to alcohol, opiates, etc. One boy said that when these junk foods are all around him, it's like an alcoholic trying not to drink, with bottles of liquor all about.

Dr. Mark Hyman notes that science shows that sugar is addictive. It lights up on a scan of the brain in the same areas as cocaine does, and it is 8 times more addictive than cocaine. Dr. David Kessler reports that 40 out of 43 cocaine-addicted rats preferred sugar to cocaine, and that rats on a sugar water diet showed bingeing, craving, and withdrawal symptoms when the sugar was taken away.

Dr. Lustig notes that the food industry knows that the earlier they expose kids to sugar, they will have branded them for the future. Dr. Hyman reports that lactose-free infant formulas replace the lactose with sugar. Every child born after 1980 grew up surrounded by these highly addictive foods. Dr. David Kessler says our brains are hijacked. Every store has junk food at the eye level of kids. Food companies pay slotting fees to grocery stores to get their products placed at the eye level of kids and at the checkout, and the stores make more money for the slotting fees than from selling the products themselves. This shows how desperate the junk food producers are to target children.

Preschoolers are targets for marketing. Kelly P. Brownell, Ph.D. Dean of Public Policy at Duke University, says, “We are paying a heavy price when we are allowing the food industry to act at will in recruiting our kids a loyal customers.” Studies show that children as young as 2 and 3 start to recognize brands. The problem is they don’t have any ads for strawberries, broccoli, etc., to counter the junk food ads. I remember from the movie “Super-size Me,” preschoolers could not recognize pictures of Jesus, George Washington, or Abraham Lincoln, but they did recognize Ronald McDonald. Former Senator Tom Harkin points out chairs donated to a preschool with “Coca Cola” in big letters on the chair backs.

Dr. Harvey Karp says, “If a foreign nation would do this to our kids, we would go to war.”

How did all this “calories in, calories out,” and, “a calorie is a calorie” start getting established in mainstream thinking?

In 1946 the school Lunch Act was passed, to help fund school lunches, establishing a policy of schools providing lunch on a regular basis. Then, when this was a regular routine, in 1981 the Reagan administration cut \$1.46 billion out of the school lunch budget, leaving the schools hanging high and dry, and that was the beginning of the fast food invasion of the schools. The schools turned to accepting good financial deals from the fast food industry, which was eager to get children hooked on their products and brand recognition so that they would be lifetime customers. By 2006, 80% of high schools had contracts with soda companies. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture has an inherent conflict of interest in being charged with the responsibility of promoting agriculture (mostly large monocultures of corn that is used for corn-based sweeteners and soft drinks) with \$8.1 billion in subsidies since 1995, and also to provide nutrition recommendations for the country, stating that we need to reduce sugar intake.

In 2010 Congress passed a law requiring the USDA to make school lunches healthier. As a part of fulfilling this directive, the USDA recommended cutting pizza from the menu. The Schwans Company, who provided 70% of the pizza for school lunches, objected. Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota wrote a letter to the USDA to protect pizzas. What followed was that pizza then started to be counted as a vegetable, because it contained tomato paste.

In 2012 the guidelines were revised, along with the first increase in the lunch budget in 30 yrs, by a grand 6 cents per student. The guideline set a new maximum on calories and doubled the requirement of fruits and vegetables (which still included pizza and french-fries.) Fast food companies still provide most of the lunches. Michael Pollan states, “The school lunch program has evolved in such a way that it is really serving the food processors more than the students.” Bill Clinton says, “We could cure 80% of the problem for children in school if we went back to preparing food in school.”

Regarding the targeting of children with advertising, political action has a long history of being ineffective in the face of lobbying from the food industry, with the lack

of public outrage that is needed to counter the domination of Congress by food corporations.

The Federal Trade Commission is charged with banning unfair, false, and misleading advertising. As early as 1977, it proposed restrictions to defend the health of America's children. It came to the conclusion that advertising by the food industry to children was unfair. Broadcasters, ad agencies, and toy companies banded together to prevent the ban. No regulations were put into place. A few years later, marketing accelerated for processed food and high fructose corn syrup, with an abundance of high priced endorsements by celebrities.

In 2004 Congress tried to regulate advertising again. Fast food objected again. They said they could police themselves. They would market less to children, and they would pull their products out of schools. Tell another big one! (My comment) What followed was an increase in junk food ads by 60% from 2008-2010, and junk food is still in the schools.

Michael Bloomberg notes that the industry targets the advertising to people who are least able to know what is good for their health, the most vulnerable, people for whom society has to provide medical care. A Yale University Study revealed that Hispanic teens were exposed to 99% more ads than their white counterparts.

The annual number of weight loss surgeries had increased nearly 5 fold from 2001 to the time this documentary was presented. Dr. David Ludwig comments, "What does it say about our society that we would rather send our children to such mutilating procedures such as gastric bypass, but lack the political will to ban junk food advertising to children and to properly fund school nutrition? It is a massive political failure that the richest country in the world places private profits above public health."

Bill Clinton says "I think America is still insufficiently alert to the damage we are all doing to our collective health by too much sugar intake."

The American Heart Association says the daily allowance of added sugar should be no more than 6-8 teaspoon per day, yet the average sugar intake per person is around ½ pound per day.

The beginning of the obesity epidemic began in 1977. The McGovern Report issued the first dietary guideline to reduce food consumption, and to decrease sugar by 40% to 15% of energy intake. The sugar, beef, and dairy associations united and objected to the report and demanded a rewrite, so the dietary goals were revised. The words, "reduced intake" were removed permanently. Instead the goal became to buy more food with less fat, and leaner products. At that time the medical community was choosing the misguided low fat, low cholesterol dietary theory, which has since been debunked. The low fat craze of the 1980's opened up a whole new market. But to make low fat processed food not taste like cardboard, sugar has to be added. Voila! From 1977-2000,

Americans doubled their intake of sugar, and the obesity epidemic was well on the way. Bill Clinton said, “We missed. I don’t think we appreciated the magnitude of it.”

The sugar lobby goes all the way to world headquarters to exert its domination. In 2002, the World Health Organization, in its technical Report Service Document 616, stated that sugar is a major, if not the cause of chronic metabolic disease and obesity. It stated that as the scientists recommended, sugar intake should be less than 10% of total calories. Senators Larry Craig and John Breaux, one democrat and one republican, asked then Secretary of Health and Human Services in the Bush administration, Tommy Thompson, to stop the report. So Secretary Thompson flew to Geneva with an ultimatum that the document be buried, or else the U.S. would withhold \$406 million in payments to the WHO. The sugar recommendation was deleted from most WHO reports up to now. The sugar lobby says that 25% of calories should come from sugar. To this day the nutrition labels list the % of daily value for other nutrients, but not for sugar. (Is it really a nutrient?) As Michael Pollan says, “The U.S. Government is subsidizing the obesity epidemic.”

Then, early in the Obama administration, Michelle Obama, concerned about children’s growing obesity problem, tried to teach and inspire children to eat more healthful foods, and grew an organic garden on the White House lawn. She challenged the Grocery Manufacturers Association with the Healthy Weight Commitment, to entirely rethink their products, and she spoke to them about decreasing marketing of sugar to children. This, like many previous efforts, had a good start, with good intentions.

Then, the inevitable happened. Coca Cola, Sara Lee, Pepsi, Hershey, Mars, and Kraft said they wanted to “join” her program, to “partner” with her. Then they changed the conversation from eating more real food and less sugar to re-engineering processed food, to decrease calories and fat, and to take 1.5 trillion calories out of the food supply, (which amounts to 14 calories per person per day). This was the re-emergence of the same old bogus theory about calories. Nothing was taken off the shelves, and we haven’t seen any decrease in marketing to children. Ms. Obama’s emphasis then changed from talking about food to focusing more on exercise. The “Let’s Move” campaign originally meant taking action, and now it came to mean physical activity. She said, “It’s not about forcing them to eat their vegetables, but about getting kids to be more active, and it’s not about demonizing any industry.” Since there was not enough public outcry against sugar (Is that because the public is addicted to sugar?), she had no political clout to go against the industry, so the children were shafted again. Gary Taubes says, “If you want to cure childhood obesity, you have to demonize industries.”

Dr. David Kessler pointed out that the biggest public health success is what we did with tobacco. We demonized the tobacco industry. Government and the media took them on. Ads were required to have equal time for anti smoking ads. After the U.S. banned indoor smoking, the European countries followed suite. Now the number of high school students who smoke has been cut in half. Sodas are the cigarettes of the 21st century. Free speech allows us to sell things that are poisonous. Our country provided leadership in the tobacco issue. Now the other countries are ahead of us on the sugar

issue. Several countries have started to ban ads, to ban junk food in schools, and to tax junk food.

Not only does the food industry have a lot at stake, but also the health insurance industry holds billions of dollars of stock in fast food. My comment – The more junk food people eat, the sicker they get, and the whole sickness industry, doctors, hospitals, insurance, etc., just gets bigger, and if the size of the pie increases, the piece of the sickness pie the insurance industry has, just gets bigger also. Private insurance companies are mostly not committed to increasing public health in the long term. A single payer system could be more motivated to do that.

Every time the public tries to limit sugar and junk food, the food industry stymies the effort and brings up the same old bogus mantra of “calories in, calories out,” and “a calories is a calorie.” The Coca Cola ad: “All calories count, and if you burn off fewer calories than you take in, you gain weight, regardless of where the calories come from, including Coca Cola.” Diet sodas are not off the hook either. Mark Hyman notes that studies show that diet sodas increase insulin, and that makes you hungry.

Mark Hyman also points out that the food industry advertises how cheap the processed food is, but in fact, most people do not know that you can eat whole foods at a lower cost, not only in dollars, but also in health.

Drs. Hyman and Lustig also note that many people who are thin are actually obese in belly fat, inside the abdomen. This is termed TOFI, thin outside, fat inside. Many normal weight children are pre-diabetic because of intra-abdominal fat. Dr. Lustig says that 40% of normal weight people have the same metabolic problem of the obese people. Considering that 30% of the people are obese, and considering the 40% of the 70% who are not yet obese, that makes over half the people with the pre-diabetic, insulin resistance, metabolic problem, headed for disaster. Then, the other half of the population is likely to go there also if they eat poisonous food. This is everyone's issue, not just the currently obese.

The purpose of this article is not only to inform people for their individual health and their family's health, but also to activate people to community and political action. It is not going to come from the political leaders, or they would have done so already. They are too influenced by the food industry. No major candidate in the 2016 Presidential election campaign has to date brought this issue of obesity or of food insecurity and poverty, farm subsidy inequities, labor abuse in the food industry, pesticides, GMO's, the need for soil regeneration, except Bernie Sanders, when he was in the running. If the people lead, the leaders will follow. We need a popular uprising to demand changes. Much of this can be done locally.

Where action teams of people in their communities and schools have demanded changes and public actions to make fresh food available, those areas have seen obesity rates decline.

Michael Pollan sums it up simply, “The most important thing you can do is to cook your own food.” The more we learn to cook and teach others to cook, the more we will activate people to collectively make a difference. This can support political action. Take the food challenge. Go to www.fedupmovie.com.

The following parties declined to be interviewed for this documentary:

Coca Cola
Pepsi
Nestle
General Mills
ConAgra
Kraft
Kellogg
Hormel
Schwan’s
Tyson’s

Americans Against Food Taxes
American Beverage Association
Corn Refiners Association
Grocery Manufacturers of America
Restaurant Association
Snack Food Association
Sugar Association
Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn
Senator Amy Klobichar
Michelle Obama