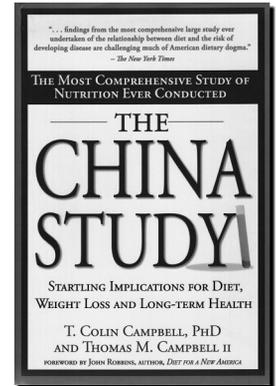


## The China Study

by T Colin Campbell, PhD, and Thomas M Campbell, II

Reviewed by Jerome Stenehjem, MD



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Out of a morass of conflicting nutritional studies and popular books comes *The China Study*, a finely woven tapestry of scientific inquiry and personal experiences of a highly respected NIH-funded scientist. This impressive work by T Colin Campbell, PhD, and his son Thomas provides chilling insights into how our nation has arrived in the third millennium with some of the highest rates of obesity, cancer, and heart disease in the world. Many of the revelations in this book could serve as an indictment of the medical profession but it becomes clear that there is plenty of blame to go around.

The authors note that cancer death rates from the 1970s to 1990s were unchanged in spite of the "War on Cancer." Obesity rates have more than doubled in 30 years and health care-related death is now the third leading cause of death in America.<sup>1</sup> But, as the story unfolds, these phenomena demonstrate not a failure of medical treatment but that the very *need* for treatment can be prevented.

Tracing the parallel emergence of modern nutrition and modern chemistry in the late 1800s, the authors show how the term "protein" became synonymous with high-quality nutrition. This concept was embraced by the emerging techno-agricultural industries and dovetailed with the expanding affluence of middle America. In the mid 1960s, Dr Campbell was asked to help solve the tragic and pervasive problem of childhood malnutrition in the Philippines, a problem of inadequate dietary protein easily solved by introducing peanuts into the diet. However, recent evidence had shown that peanuts were often contaminated with a fungus that produces the potent carcinogen, aflatoxin. Indeed, Dr Campbell's investigation found high levels of aflatoxin in the urine of Philippine children afflicted with primary liver cancer. His sleuthing eventually revealed that the peanut butter was laced with aflatoxin from mold-ridden peanuts. This investigation might have ended as yet another triumph of science over disease but for the intersection of two isolated pieces of data. A prominent Manila physician told Dr Campbell of his observation that childhood liver cancer afflicted only the best-nourished Philippine children. About this time, Dr Campbell read an obscure study indicating that rats subjected to aflatoxin on a high-protein diet had a 100% incidence of liver cancer, while rats subjected to afla-

toxin fed a low-protein diet had a 0% incidence of liver cancer! Dr Campbell eventually repeated and expanded the aflatoxin-protein study in rats and demonstrated that while aflatoxin initiates cancerous foci, the growth of foci into cancerous tumors is fueled by consumption of animal protein.

The opportunity to validate these findings in humans led Dr Campbell to China where Premier Chou En Lai had mandated a study on cancer and other causes of death involving 880 million Chinese citizens living in 2400 counties. This outcome study of a genetically and culturally homogeneous populace where cancer rates varied by up to 100-fold from one county to another provided a potential gold mine for studying lifestyle and nutritional factors. Dr Campbell's team administered questionnaires and blood tests on 6500 Chinese living in 65 counties, collecting data on lifestyle, diet, and disease variables. By comparing disease groupings by region, subjects separated neatly into two primary groups: the affluent with higher animal protein and fat intake who suffered from cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, and the poor who suffered primarily from infectious diseases, diseases of pregnancy, and metabolic diseases other than diabetes.

Animal protein consumption becomes the linchpin of Dr Campbell's work, which unavoidably positions him in diametric opposition to powerful agro-pharma-economic interests. But the Campbell duo delivers blow after scientific blow that could only leave the proponents of high protein diets staggering in a pugilistic daze. As Abramson illustrated in his book *Overdo\$ed America*,<sup>2</sup> so does *The China Study* expose the forces that protect the status quo and their economic interests at the expense of the consumer's health and wellbeing. Going beyond the perils of high animal protein consumption, the authors provide useful insights into the benefits of a whole plant-food diet without holding any expectation of mass migration to their beliefs. Those who find these conclusions too foreign should suspend their disbelief until they have read *The China Study*. ❖

### References

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2. Abramson J. *Overdo\$ed American: the broken promise of American medicine*. 1st ed. New York: HarperCollins; c2004.

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