

Health & Healing®

TOMORROW'S MEDICINE TODAY

January 1995 Supplement

The American Dietetic Association Must be Stopped in its Tracks

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Folks, a female David and mammoth Goliath have squared off, and the fight is on. Shari Lieberman, Ph.D., certified nutrition specialist (C.N.S.), and former registered dietician (R.D.), has slung a \$40-million defamation lawsuit at the brainless head of a particularly nasty giant, the American Dietetic Association (ADA). And you better hope Shari wins.

You see, this organization is sort of like your neighbor's once-friendly dog that has turned rabid, and is now in the sandbox with your children. The activists, R.D. members of the ADA, who have watched hundreds of thousands starve in our "modern" hospitals, are now trying to censure all more enlightened points of view—thus wreaking malnutrition on your household as well.

The agenda of the ADA is so intolerant of nutritional progress that they not only opposed the recently passed Hatch/Harkin/Richardson law, which curbed the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) tyrannical regulation of the nutritional supplement industry; they also awarded their 1994 "Outstanding Service Award" to the long-time FDA apologist and nemesis to all nutritional progress, California congressman, Henry Waxman!

In my opinion, the leadership and activist members of this group are dangerous. For example, at the October 5, 1988 ADA meeting, Cora Bouchard R.D., publicly recommended having a "bonfire of bad school books," meaning any books recommending nutritional supplements—which Bouchard characterized as "quackery products." You have to search far and wide to find a more backward and intolerant group, and their rhetoric hasn't changed since.

Shari Lieberman needs and deserves your support—unless you think book-burnings are a good idea. We'll discuss the case shortly, but if you are wondering about the nutritional expertise of these dieticians, just visit your local hospital.

Malnutrition in Hospitals is Staggering

The R.D.s have long controlled dietary services in hospitals. Malnutrition in hospitals is so rampant that an estimated 50,000 patients starve to death each year. In 1984, *Forbes* magazine described hospital malnutrition as "staggering," and it hasn't improved at all.

According to a 1988 review of hospital malnutrition studies by Alice Smith, M.S., R.D., 75% of people who were well-nourished on admission to hospital became malnourished after only two weeks. When nutritional support was given, an unbelievable 95% received it only after they had developed complications!

Yet if you bring in some nutritional supplements to a hospitalized family member, you are often blocked by the hospital Registered Dietician, who, along

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wien conventional physicians, is responsible for the "staggering" hospital malnutrition.

The ADA: Cheerleader for Big Business

You'd think this track record would cause some quiet soul-searching followed by radical changes of policy. Instead, the leadership of the ADA wants to silence those in their ranks who are enlightened. The question is, why?

You must realize that the American Dietetic Association is simply a private trade association of dieticians that functions more like a cheerleader for big business. Like childish rock stars wearing a sign that says, "Give money, will endorse," they join hands with large food and pharmaceutical companies. If this group has any concept of conflict of interest, it is all but invisible. ADA proudly flaunts its financial ties to multinational food and drug companies.

In April of this year, callers to the ADA free "public information" hotline were told that this "public service" was funded in part by Monsanto, makers of Nutrasweet™. Notice the paradox here. The ADA endorses Nutrasweet™, a non-nutritive chemical sweetener that breaks down in your body into methyl alcohol and formaldehyde, and has been the subject of more "adverse reaction reports" to the FDA than any food additive in history. But it publicly embarrasses a Ph.D. nutritionist for saying that vitamins may enhance the immune system of the elderly!

Not long ago, the ADA also mounted a campaign against calcium supplements by saying that you don't need to take calcium supplements, just eat dairy products to protect your bones. If the ADA knew anything about nutrition science, it would know that the cultures with the worst osteoporosis are precisely those that consume the most dairy products! On one flyer it sent out, the ADA advised contacting the National Dairy Council for more information!

Just What is a Registered Dietitian?

The Registered Dietitian (R.D.) credential is certification by the association that an individual has minimal skills in dietetics such as food service, meal planning and basic "entry-level" nutrition knowledge.

The R.D. certification is not an educational degree, like a Ph.D. or an M.D., nor is it a license to do anything. It also does not represent a consistent degree of education. In 1969, to swell their numbers, the ADA "grandfathered" 20,000 with R.D. certifica-

tions on those working in the food service industry many with no more than an undergraduate degree in some form of Home Economics. Three years later, an ADA study conceded that the science training of the R.D.s was hardly adequate, yet no certifications were withdrawn.

Most R.D.s work in hospitals, schools, prisons, and other institutions, where their primary function is food service—figuring out how many #2 cans of kernel corn it takes to feed 320 people.

Dietetics is a necessary function in society, but dietetics is not nutrition science, and therein lies the rub. Those at the ADA seem to equate knowledge of dietetics (such as meal planning) with knowledge of nutrition, and, even worse, to believe that the R.D. is the ultimate mark of nutrition expertise.

Now let's look at Shari Lieberman's case.

What the ADA Did to Shari Lieberman

Dr. Shari Lieberman holds a Ph.D. in clinical nutrition and exercise physiology from an accredited university, and teaches graduate-level at the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. She is also a certified nutrition specialist (C.N.S.), a credential which, unlike the R.D., is available only to those who hold a graduate degree. The C.N.S. credential is focused on nutrition science, unfettered with concerns such as which utensils are needed to cook up 14 gallons of soup.

Dr. Lieberman shares her knowledge in the classroom, in newspaper and magazine columns, and in her books. For instance, in her magazine columns, Dr. Lieberman pointed out that EPA from fish oil is often helpful for psoriasis (which it is), that garlic supplements are useful for heart and blood vessel disorders (which they are), and that a broad-based nutritional supplement regime can enhance the immune systems of the elderly (which it can).

These well-documented comments infuriated the R.D. leadership who, in my opinion, can be counted on to oppose all nutritional advancements not only before, but even after they are generally accepted by others. A complaint against Dr. Lieberman was filed by Ira Milner, R.D., a disgruntled member who took issue not with Dr. Lieberman's actual *practice* of dietetics, but with what she wrote in her columns. If you are an R.D., you are not free to comment on advances in nutritional science. Instead, to avoid risk of censure or suspension, you must closely follow the ADA's "party line" that food is the preferable source

of nutrients, which in many cases is false. The leadership of the ADA responded to Dr. Lieberman's columns by formally suspending her R.D. credential for three years.

Joan Priestley, M.D., who has followed the case against Lieberman, commented, "One might call the ADA's proceedings a kangaroo court, but that would be an insult to the kangaroo." In short, the actions of the ADA leadership were outrageous, and are the basis for Dr. Lieberman's defamation suit.

For example:

- Dr. Lieberman's R.D. certification was suspended by a committee of the ADA including the current president, Doris Derehian and president-elect, Ronni Chernoff. But guess what? These folks did not have the authority to suspend Dr. Lieberman's credential. All issues related to the R.D. credential are meant to be handled exclusively by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR), which was separated from the association to prevent the R.D. from being used as a political weapon. This separation is also required by the National Commission on Certifying Agencies, which accredits the CDR. Yet the CDR was not involved at all in Dr. Lieberman's case.

- The reason the committee gave for suspending Dr. Lieberman's R.D. was that her practice of dietetics was not scientifically sound. Guess what? Her dietetic practice was never even investigated! The entire case hinged on her written opinions, which is as clear a violation of the principle of free speech as you will ever see.

- Dr. Lieberman supplied 185 scientific citations to support the writings that were challenged in the complaint against her. However, these world-class Jello makers at the ADA simply determined that they were not supportive, without producing a single scientific article in rebuttal. Talk about acting without the benefit of sound science!

Some ADA Members are Upset

The case against Lieberman may split the organization. Writing to Lieberman's lawyer, Jonathan Emord, Betty Wedman, M.S., R.D., summarized the feelings of at least some ADA members. "I have been a Registered Dietitian for over 20 years and my reaction to this announcement of the ethics violation was that the 'motherhouse' (ADA) was warning any of its wayward practitioners to get the message that they can only practice dietetics based on how the

industry-supported American Dietetic Association dictates. So much for professionalism in dietetics."

Well, to repair the obvious damage to her reputation, and in the name of free speech and common decency, Shari Lieberman picked up her sling shot, stepped out of the village and filed a 40-million-dollar defamation suit.

Look What Else the ADA is up to

Meanwhile, the power-crazed ADA is not content to silence only those within its association; it wants to silence everyone else as well. The ADA's political agenda is "licensure." For over ten years, ADA state chapters have been quietly asking legislatures to convert their trade association's credential into "state licenses," thus allowing few people other than R.D.s to give nutritional advice or counseling. This makes it a crime for thousands of others (with far more expertise than the average R.D.) to give advice.

This drive to silence other opinions on nutrition is ironic, because the R.D.s are always the last know anything about nutrition—if then. They are the "not yet and probably never group" that, to my recollection, have never made an insightful comment about anything. Patrick Quillin, Ph.D., R.D., writes that "No major nutritional advancement has come under the authorship of an R.D. Not only are R.D.s seldom in front of the pack, but we are habitually a decade or more behind..." Why should state legislature license the unformed in order to silence the informed?

So far, the R.D.s' campaign for licensure has been somewhat successful in 35 states, but the laws passed vary from inconsequential to draconian. Ohio has a draconian law. Here's an example of how it "works."

Joyce Johnson from Pasadena, CA, is a nationally known nutritionist. She has taught nutrition at two California colleges, has been a Director of the Pritikin Program in Santa Monica, served as nutritionist at Pasadena City Hospital, and was chairwoman of the Los Angeles County Task Force on Nutrition. The City of Los Angeles honored her with a Scroll from the City for her service.

In July of 1988, Dr. Robert Schweikart, Director of Continuing Medical Education at Doctor's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, invited Ms. Johnson to speak to the medical staff. Her presentation was entitled "What Today's Physician Needs to Know About Nutrition." She also planned two lectures for the lay public.

Well, guess what happened?

Mary Ellen Bartholemew, R.D., a dietician at the hospital, convinced the doctors to cancel the program because, as she explained to a reporter, "In the state of Ohio, the only persons who are allowed to do nutritional counseling are licensed dietitians." Dr. Schweikart, with considerable embarrassment, cancelled the program, humbly apologized to Ms. Johnson, and sent her the full honorarium.

Surely the state legislature of Ohio did not intend to empower a hospital employee with an R.D. (which is not even an educational degree) to stop an M.D. and director of hospital medical education from inviting a nationally known nutritionist to speak to physicians. Well that is exactly what the dieticians wanted, and in Ohio, they got it, and they will be trying to "get it" in your state as well. It gets worse.

R.D.s at Work Even in Church

On September 29, Ms. Johnson received a threatening phone call from the Ohio Board of Dietetics telling her that she could get arrested in Ohio if she carried out her plans for a lay seminar. Not wanting a criminal record, Ms. Johnson agreed to sign a letter from the Board that dictated what she could and could not do. An R.D. was sent by the Board to monitor her every word. Many in the audience were disgusted and visibly outraged that the State of Ohio was censoring and monitoring Ms. Johnson. But what happened next will turn your stomach.

Ms. Johnson was invited to give sermons at two Catholic churches. Guess what! Some pea-brained R.D. went into the churches and took notes, looking for "illegal" nutritional advice!

Many of the people wanted to have a private consultation with Ms. Johnson. To avoid getting her arrested, they had to drive across the border to Kentucky just to talk about nutrition.

You see, this licensure nonsense doesn't protect anything except the vested interest of the dieticians. Even worse, with state powers, the activist members of this trade association become a nutrition gestapo that monitors, censors, and persecutes all who do not comply with their party line.

Register Your Protest Against the ADA

Folks, get your sling shot and meet me at the village bakery. There's a monster lurking in our midst, and Dr. Lieberman is out there all by herself. You can help her if you act now. Here's how:

1. If you are as irritated by the ADA's nonsense as I am, one way to make your dissatisfaction known is to contribute to Shari Lieberman's defense fund. That will help her vindicate her reputation and expose the unfairness of this organization in open court. Send \$25 or more to the Shari Lieberman Legal Defense Fund, c/o Emord & Associates, 1133 Fifteenth St. NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20005. In return, the fund will send you a copy of Dr. Lieberman's excellent, well-referenced book, *The Real Vitamin and Mineral Book*. In this book, Dr. Lieberman proposes Optimum Daily Allowances (ODA), of vitamins and minerals, the amounts likely necessary for optimum health—as opposed to the Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs) offered by the FDA and others, which are designed to merely prevent deficiency. I highly recommend it.

2. Please watch out for an ADA licensure push in your state. You folks in Ohio had best have your law thrown out. And you folks in Massachusetts, *for gosh sakes, protect yourselves!* Not only have the activist R.D.s petitioned your legislators for licensure, but in a very devious fashion, they are vying to implement the law if it passes. They are asking the state to delegate the licensure program to a "private entity" that sounds suspiciously like the state chapters of the ADA!

Citizens for Nutrition Choice (413/623-2108) is working hard to preserve your rights in Mass., and they need some help. Call and see how you can lend a hand before the "motherhouse" gets entrenched. Licensure bills are also in the works for New Hampshire, Oregon, Hawaii, and New Jersey, so ask yourself: Are you going to be better off if the only ones allowed to give you nutritional advice are the folks who oversee staggering malnutrition in hospitals, and consider most nutritional supplements to be "quack" products?

3. You R.D.s that are angry with me, the messenger, had best check the message. Your leaders don't lead—they intimidate. Their agenda is simply a blueprint for tyranny. The rank and file should either clean house or walk away. There is no reason why you can't learn new things along with the rest of us, and earn respect, instead of hoodwinking state legislatures into mandating it for you. If you continue to seek power instead of knowledge to coerce instead of to influence, you will only reap contempt from those trying to advance the field of nutrition. Is that the legacy you wish to leave to your grandchildren?