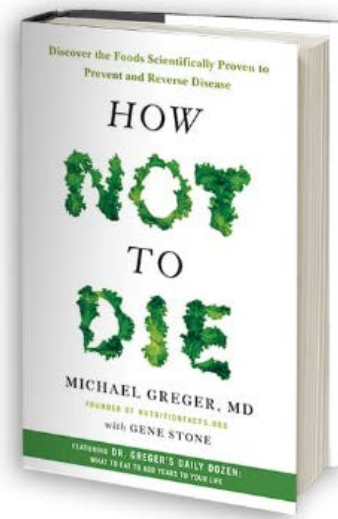


Words About Wellness

A Book Review of “How Not to Die”

Submitted by Karla Thompson, PhD
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A few months ago, I downloaded the audiobook of **How Not to Die**, by Michael Greger, M.D., and I started listening to it when I was on the treadmill or elliptical at the gym. Then I bought the book for my sister and the cookbook for myself. Two weeks ago, I bought myself a hard copy of the book. I know, the title is a more than little goofy. “How Not to Die?” Seriously? Well, yes. Seriously. The book is not about how to achieve immortality, but about how to eat well in order to live well. The links below will take you to three different reviews of the book.

This first link, <https://nutritionfacts.org/book/>, takes you to Michael Greger’s own website, so it’s not surprising the description of the book is positively glowing.

This second link, <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/how-not-to-die-review>, takes you to a review which is much more critical. This review asserts that Dr. Greger is “cherry picking... selectively choosing or suppressing evidence to fit a predefined framework. In Greger's case, that means presenting research when it supports plant-based eating and ignoring it (or creatively spinning it) when it doesn't.” Some of the criticism is focused on Dr. Greger’s statements about what foods increase risk for kidney stones. The author, Denise Minger, is a nutrition blogger who readily admits that she does not actually have a degree in nutrition. I don’t have a degree in nutrition, either, and I suspect that most folks who are reading this newsletter also do not have degrees in nutrition. However, that doesn’t keep us from wanting to know more or having opinions, informed or otherwise.

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The third review, <https://thehealthsciencesacademy.org/book-reviews/how-not-to-die/>, is fair to midlin'. It notes that Dr. Greger uses the first half of the book to explore the relationship between diet and disease and then uses the remainder of the book to provide advice and practical tips on improving one's diet by increasing intake of whole foods and avoiding commercially-processed foods and animal products. The review states, "It is widely accepted that lifestyle factors affect many types of diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and type II diabetes," and then goes on to note that the book discusses the evidence linking nutrition to 15 different specific diseases. Also mentioned is Dr. Greger's "Daily Dozen," a checklist for recommended consumption of many different foods. It suggests that we should be eating three servings of beans a day, which I am finding difficult to accomplish – for many reasons.

I am pretty sure that there is no one source that can adequately describe the relationship between what we eat and our overall health, but I am really glad that science can aid us in figuring this stuff out – and that we, as health care providers, advocates, and consumers, have the ability and desire to make sense of the wealth of information available to us. We may not all agree on what it means to eat "well," but I think most of us can agree that eating well contributes to our overall "well-being."



Author: Michael Greger, MD