How You Can Use Food as Medicine Transcript

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Introduction and Jennifer Maynard's Background

Welcome to another episode of Reverse Your Type 2 Diabetes Summit 2.0. I'm your co-host, Dr. Will Hsu. Today I have the immense pleasure of introducing you to a top innovator in the food and medicine movement.

That's Jennifer Maynard, the CEO of Nutrition for Longevity. Jennifer, welcome to the to this educational session, to the summit. Love to hear a little bit about who you are, what brought you to to get on this journey of of reversing diabetes and other conditions with food and yeah tell us more about yourself as.

Well, thank you for having me. Very excited to join. Yeah. I spent 20 plus years in the pharmaceutical biotech arena, so most of my background is in specialty medicines.

All the ologies hematology, ophthalmology, Oncology loved what I did in that space. I was an executive living in Switzerland, had really a wonderful career in front of me, but I just felt like as an industry, we weren't doing enough with food, as medicine.

And that's an area that's of high passion for me. My father in law was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, and we just saw in a very short amount of time how much his health really spiraled.

Very quickly how many drugs he had to be put on in a very short amount of time. And really his quality of life diminished immensely. And this is obviously something I cared about.

So it really brought this home for me that I needed to do something about this and in a different way. And I feel like food should really be at the forefront of our health care toolbox and it's kind of pushed to the side.

So I actually left my career behind and co-founded nutrition for longevity and really just wanted to legitimize the science of nutrition with research studies really showing that this is a valid solution.

It's just as valid as anything else in the toolbox. And then one of my missions was really to bring it to life with insurance reimbursement, which I feel like is absolutely essential that food can be used as a treatment and can be reimbursed in the same way.

And I'm really excited that this last year nutrition for like gravity broke into that space. We now have every major insurance company in the United States under contract and our meals can actually be reimbursed for Type 2 diabetes for supporting people as they go through their journey in the Medicaid and Medicare Advantage space.

So it's been quite a journey. Big, big change for me, but something that I feel is a personal mission and really can get behind.

Why Nutrition for Longevity Was Founded

And again, yeah, and my father in law, just to wrap that up, when we really started working with him on his nutrition, we saw a transformation in the reverse side.

So we really saw him move into remission and and that'll happen and is what really drove me to start the company. So absolutely that that's amazing. And another maverick in this space that has left the drug industry to come into a more naturalistic approach to reversing diabetes.

But let's start with the name Nutrition for Longevity. That's an interesting name. But tell us about how that came about. What does that mean for for the company and for the people who are using your products and services? Yeah.

So one of the things that was important to me, as I mentioned, was legitimizing the nutrition with science. And so we really founded the company on the longevity diet.

I wanted something that already had a stronghold of research behind it. So Dr. Longo's research behind the longevity diet, 30 years of research of the longevity regions of the world where people live the longest, healthiest lives and what is it about those regions that's so special?

And they have even though they're in completely different parts of the world, they have a lot of similarities in their macronutrient profiles and really about how many vegetables they eat in their diet, this really nicely balanced diet.

So even though it's not a low carb diet from a processed food standpoint, it's very it's very low in processed foods, but it has a lot of fiber and phytonutrients.

And if you look at Dr. Longo's research, it really shows how important that is, especially for cardio metabolic disorders. But also, if you look at most of the other chronic illnesses, your allergies that I used to work in, ophthalmology, oncology, you also see a huge dependence on that fiber and phytonutrients in all those vegetables that you get in the diet.

So we really mimicked the macronutrients that these centenarians, these longevity regions were were consuming. And you see that there's almost identical things between each region, even though they eat slightly different foods.

Those macronutrients were really important. And we've actually even done studies on our own food. And we were able to achieve a 97% time and range performance with the meals.

So it's not that our meals are just helping with remission, but they're helping right from the beginning, balance that blood sugar throughout the day and even working with folks like will sew to identify how to really make sure that the the carbs between the meals are consistent not only across the week, but also throughout the day.

So you could get that kind of time and reach balance. And this is what we mean by food as medicine is we're not just throwing food in a tray. We're very intentionally tailoring this food for.

And we we support 36 different medical indications. Type 2 diabetes is one of those, but we tailor those meals to exactly what that client needs. And then we also support a lot of food allergies.

And our food is so minimally processed to begin with, we automatically don't have a lot of things that people can grow sensitive to, like artificial preservatives, fillers, additives, refined carbs.

Those are things that we really minimize. And if you look at the longevity regions, that's what they do as well. So the longevity diet is really at the forefront of everything we do and the baseline and our starting point of all of our meals.

I love to talk a little bit more about about sort of the principles, the longevity diet you mentioned. These are the patterns of dietary consumption there are in the longevity regions of the world.

Right? So you talked about less artificial food ingredients. You talk about natural wood fibers, What other sort of things that stand out?

Longevity Diet Principles and Meal Design

Because I tell you, you know, our listeners are confused because there's so many debates on the science of nutrition, right? There are people who say, well, all carbs are bad, so they're in the ketogenic diet.

Some people say, no, no, no, no, it's the other way around. And so let's dig a little deeper for the listeners, especially when in regards to getting the dual goals of longevity in reversing Type 2 diabetes, because a lot of the diets only focus on either one or the other, right?

So, yes. Absolutely. So there's a few things we focus on. One is we have almost this obsession in the United States with protein. We need tons of protein.

It's one of the number one things that kind of is quoted when people look at nutrition and do Google searches and such. And we actually notice in the United States, we're over.

Most people are eating way too much protein. And this is one of the things that Dr. Longo has found can accelerate aging, especially animal based proteins.

So we focus very heavily on healthy proteins and giving an adequate amount of protein, but not an overage of protein in the body. And there's a lot of research starting to mount that shows things like inflammation in the body.

Protein can actually accelerate that. So we focus on really healthy, adequate levels of protein, a lot of legumes. So this is something that's incredible across all the longevity regions is on average they eat a half a cup of legumes per day.

So they're getting a lot of their protein from different types of legumes and we put a lot of that in our meals as well. Those are low in the Thiamin is a really critical amino acid when we look at triggering IGF and inflammation in the body.

So we have those proteins, we can have complete proteins and we we make sure the body gets what it needs again, an adequate level, but not having that overage of animal based protein.

So that's one key that goes across pretty much all of our meal meals, except for a few very specific ones that require high protein, like some renal diets and things like that.

But in general, everything is a very moderate level of protein. The second is just very high levels of diverse fruits and vegetables. So we have a lot of leafy greens in the diet.

We're one of the few meal companies that has a lot of leafy greens in the diet because they are delicate, they're hard to ship, but it's been a priority for us.

And then just diverse, low starchy vegetables. So even though there are some root vegetables, we aren't a company that we're not an elimination diet. We don't cut every carb out of the diet, but we do it in moderation.

So the starchy carbs are also controlled and then leafy green carbs and cruciferous vegetables and things. And we really focus on eating a diverse spectrum.

The longevity regions eat very diverse fruits and vegetables and in each region, and they're very colorful. Typically, if you look at Okinawa, they have so much blue and purple in their diet and it's the least colorful spectrum that we eat in the United States.

So we try to bring in our meal kits, a lot of diverse color as well. And those are that spectrum of phytonutrients that are actually feeding our gut microbiome, supporting our body's immune system.

So that's really important as well. And the other one is the fiber. It's a very high fiber diet. The only one in ten Americans are getting enough fiber in their diet.

And if you look at the impact on cardiometabolic disease or disorders is that fiber helps us really slow release our sugar in the in the body. And that's what we think is really key to balancing out that blood sugar, that 97 time and range that we're able to achieve, which is, you know, the average in the United States is far superior to what we're achieving.

And it's that fiber that's really slowing that that blood sugar in the system and really level loading at throughout the day. So so to Jennifer, it sounds like a really interesting approach right there by looking at what people who live

more than 100 years eat and then incorporate that into it with laboratory kind of evidence to support this.

A relevant question I think a lot of our listeners are going to ask is, well, how does it taste? Because it may be good for you, but a lot of things that are good for you don't taste well. So can you speak to that?

And our objective ways to verify that is absolutely. Absolutely. So, I mean, one thing that is is always funny to me. We work with some of the best chefs in the United States, even in the world.

And what I think surprises them is when we introduce some of our recipes, even some of Dr. Longo's favorite recipes that he's brought over from Italy, they're shocked at how simple they are.

They're they're like, this only has a you know, a handful of ingredients. And it's actually really delicious and full of flavor. And I think it surprises people.

So one of our missions is to make healthy food taste good. And we've done this especially in our medical reimbursement side of the business with a lot of comfort, comfort foods.

So we've really created dishes that might be something that's meatloaf, mashed potatoes and green beans, which, you know, we don't always associate with health, but we will we will find ways to have more vegetables in that diet.

We'll find ways to have cauliflower, different cruciferous vegetables kind of even hidden in some of the meals. So you get these familiar flavors for a good share of the population.

So they can really enjoy that. And sources I can't say enough about sauces. We're going to be launching some products that have just even the sauces available because sauces can change the taste of everything.

Our salad dressings are all made from scratch, very flavorful with herbs and polyphenol rich olive oil, so you can really enjoy it.

Taste, Convenience, and Blood Sugar Control

We consider our food restaurant quality something that you could go to a good mid-range, mid to high range restaurant and I'll leave with it. But but it's healthier.

It's not packed with sodium. So that's one of the biggest differences, is we have very low sodium. We don't have a lot of the refined fats and sugars, which were highly addicted, too.

But we see that people that try our meals and stick with our meals within two weeks completely reset their taste buds. They no longer crave the sugar, they no longer crave the high salt and fat processed fats.

And that's what we really try to coach people, is try something a little bit different. We have tailored it to also comfort foods. We do most of the regional foods, so we have a beautiful Latin menu.

We have more of kind of a pan-Asian menu. So we do. And those are yeah, and those are inspired by the longevity regions of the world. So you have these these Italy, Greece, Okinawa, Japan, Nicoya, Costa Rica, you have these different flavor profiles that are very diverse and incredible flavor profiles behind them.

So those inspire our dishes. We've worked with some of the best chefs to really refine those flavors. And then when people let their, you know, our taste buds completely reset in two weeks.

And so if they allow themselves to eat this healthy food, it's completely transformative to them. And then they really are like, I don't want all these cookies anymore.

I don't even crave them. And they start to see this incredible transformation across all of their nutrition. So you mentioned chefs. So this means it's a ready to. Emile.

It's it doesn't come here. I don't have to cook. Yes, we I mean, this is you can heat it on your stove. You can heat it in the oven. You could heat it in the microwave if you use a microwave.

So this is made as convenient as possible. And even I trial all our meals to make sure that they're continuing to be restaurant quality. And I'm, you know, just as a busy businesswoman, it's so helpful to be able to, you know, a few days a week not have to worry about making dinner and still having a really healthy diet.

Yeah, that's that's for sure. Now, you in passing, you mentioned something that's actually really important about this timing range, especially for people with type two diabetes. Right.

So so you're referring to using continuous Scooter's monitor and to see the impact of this this nutrition on the blood glucose. And so maybe introduce to us this concept of time range and let's say let's kind of impact of that.

Yeah, I mean, it all goes to that balancing that blood sugar throughout the day. And for us, we wanted to not only study that because we know our care managers that's important to them is to have blood sugar control.

These are the ones that the folks that are oftentimes prescribing this to their patients and they sometimes will even wear blood glucose monitors to actually make sure that the meals are achieving this.

And so for us, that was a top priority. We didn't want to just see that we had healthy meals, but we wanted something that was tangible to measure. And that was one of the most important measurements for us to show is, you know, obviously medication reduction is really important, but to be able to show that the meals, meal to meal across the day and across the days of the week could be heavily controlled.

I mean, 97% is I don't know that I've seen better of a diet. And it's really just showing that we're not getting these huge spikes and drops and spikes and drops, which a lot of times that's what our our diet naturally does.

If we're not having those those fiber and phytonutrients and the proteins and the lagoons and things really nicely balancing out how our body is metabolizing those sugars.

So the design factor here is that you're controlling the carbohydrate contents with, with novel ingredients that's tasty so that you're balancing your diet, balancing out the glucose level throughout the day.

That's actually really important because I've seen so many dietary recommendations or meal kits that basically just give you kind of the carbohydrate for the day.

And it changes from meal to meal change from day to day. And the patients are not testing their drugs, their medications on day to day level. And then you see this mismatch.

So you see this glucose up and down and it's a source of a lot of frustration. So, yeah, I really glad you're doing something like this. Yeah, absolutely.

And a lot of the meals on the market that will even say diabetes friendly, they'll range from meal to meal over 100 grams of carbohydrates. Ours was only range about ten grams max amount.

So it's a really, really tightly controlled. And what it shocks a lot of people is we do have healthy grains in our diet. We do have lots of vegetables and these things are carbohydrates, but we focus on really healthy, clean sources of carbohydrate and we control those starchy carbs.

So again, you get high consistency on that carb load in the body and very high fiber, which helps you balance that out. And let's address a little bit about the satiety factor.

Right. So many of our listeners probably have this this mindset that they want to lose weight because it's good for them. Is this a ISO calorie diet or is this a high calorie diet?

So this is this is a healthy calorie level for a man and a woman. So we're not restricting calories. That's one thing that's really important for us is people are getting adequate calories.

Satiety, Coaching, and Behavior Change

It's and that's part of Dr. Longo's research is he doesn't want people just going on a short term diet. He wants something that would be sustainable long term.

So people, of course, can do intermittent fasting. It's our food can be worked into that sort of a schedule very easily. But it's really important that they're getting adequate calories.

So it's not about the calorie restriction of why they lose weight, it's because of the fiber that's keeping them for. We see people snack a lot less because even if you get these healthy foods, but then you snack a lot in between, that can obviously cause those blood sugar fluctuations and that can also cause weight gain.

So when you're eating a lot of leafy greens and a lot of fruits and vegetables, that fiber can really again help you feel full as well. The adequate levels of proteins, the legumes.

And then we use very high quality fats, so fats from nuts and polyphenol rich olive oil. So those can also sachets and provide the calories. But it's a very healthy source of fat, not refined, not heavily processed.

I can attest to that. I published this study a couple of years ago looking at traditional Asian diet that was high in fiber, all with natural resources and natural sources and the participants in the study, they were so full, even though they couldn't finish all the food we were giving them.

And that's the natural satiety that comes from natural fibers. It's not supplemented by fiber, but natural fiber. Yeah, part of their eating lifestyle, it really it can change kind of our satiety centers in the brain.

Fantastic. I wanted to talk a little bit about about the service component. So I know nutrition for longevity, even though its flagship is the products that you also have dietitians on for you, you have programs you're running.

Tell us more about that because this is so relevant to people living with diabetes. Absolutely. So one of the things we noticed early on, even it was shocking to me when we did our first study with Type 2 diabetes patients, and it was an overweight Midwestern population.

And we were really surprised that 50% of the population and we lost in recruitment because they they denied having diabetes. This was severe diabetes.

That was part of our recruitment criteria. So they said, no, we don't need to be in a program like this. We don't have diabetes, we're fine. So there was a very high emotional component of it and then the second one is the the group that we fully coached with our dietician services.

The first question we got was, can you stop and explain what diabetes even is? Because I don't know and nobody's ever explained it to me. So when our dietitians counsel folks about their their diabetes and the impact of nutrition, they feel very empowered.

And we see that it's a really important part of the overall program is to not just send people meals, but to help them understand what's happening in their body and to feel the shift.

Because we see within two weeks, if people oftentimes don't start even adjusting their medication and they can start crashing at night. So we coach them on healthy snacks to eat if that happens.

But to really be in close discussion with their doctor because their body will start going through shifts and insulin resistance and all the great progressions that start to happen with remission of diabetes.

And so that coaching aspect really walking them through and helping them understand what is the disease, how can they impact it with their decisions, with nutrition, and then what is happening in their body when they're actually feeling these changes and and really explaining, it's okay, you know, it's this is going to happen so that it happens.

It's a good thing that it's happened. It's it means your body is finally reacting to food the way it should be and this is what you need to do about it.

And so we really like them to be in close collaboration with their practitioner, their doctor, and really together as a team, helping them work on that remission.

And that to me is key in in even changing dietary behaviors. I live in Kentucky in a farming, very rural farming area, and I have a little farmstand just for my neighbors.

We put out some tomatoes and peppers and I'm all about color and diversity of color and my vegetables. So I'll have every color bright tomatoes in the baskets, all every other color pepper, and no one was buying the colorful ones.

And so finally I ran into some neighbors and they're like, Do you? You don't have any peppers? I said, No, there's three baskets of rainbow peppers down there.

They were like, Those are peppers. So just helping educate people and expose them to different foods they may have not been exposed to that are really good for the body and diverse spectrum.

You know, they might be used to only eating a green bell pepper or a red tomato and getting them to explore foods that are maybe outside of their norm, but really good for their body and delicious.

Because what's funny is after that happened, every single rainbow pepper basket was sold out, but they just didn't have that exposure. And so we see that the coaching is just absolutely critical to the behavior change and the education.

Absolutely. Now let's come to what I think one of the most unbelievable timely changes, and that is around the area of reimbursement. Yes. You at the beginning of the program, you mentioned that these meals are reimbursed.

That means they are free. I can't believe I've been practicing medicine for over 20 years. I never heard of being paid to treat disease. Is this new? Is it here to stay?

And how do our listeners get a hold of this? Yeah. This absolutely. So I mean it it is fairly new so there's been home delivery meals and medically tailored bills have been around in the insurance space for for some time.

But it's been very much a hidden benefit and it didn't have broad coverage previously. The last revision of the Chronic IL Act, which really came into heavy effect in 2022 and it was a little bit buried with COVID.

So it's just really, really starting to hit the market, but it made home delivery meals and medically tailored meals accessible to a broad population of Medicaid patients and Medicare Advantage.

So just in the last year, the number of Medicare Advantage plans that cover meals went from 55% to over 85%.

Insurance Reimbursement and How to Get Started

And so 44% of Medicare Advantage clients actually qualify for the meals through having one of 36 different chronic illnesses and this was, you know, Congress and the government's, you know, push to truly get behind food as medicine and treating chronic illness with nutrition as as a first line of defense, or at least in the toolbox.

So we've contracted, as I mentioned, with all the major insurance providers, we're rolling out state by state. So we're heavy in the Northeast, the Midwest and the South, and we're adding states every single month.

And what's really exciting is how many people, especially with type two diabetes, qualify for these meals and can have it fully reimbursed. Usually they cover between 7 to 14 meals a week, fully covered, no co-pay.

We also offer our meals at a discounted rate, a contract rate for cash pit clients as well as their insurance doesn't cover it. And we're actually working at a policy level to even get the meals covered before you have a chronic illness.

You know, earlier on to where we can get it to a little bit more of a prevention level. And there's a lot of changes happening, a lot of exciting things that were part of this movement to even take it to the next level to where we can get it in early stages, like preventing diabetes.

If somebody has early, early stages that we can still catch it very early. But right now, at least if somebody is combating it in one of those 36 indications that we support, at least they have that solution at their fingertips.

And it's very easy. As you mentioned, it's a prepared meals, so they don't have to do a ton of work to stay on, You know, something that may seem very prescriptive, but the good thing about the longevity diet is it's actually a very liberal diet.

There's not it's not so restrictive that you can't you know, it doesn't eliminate all these foods from your diet. It just keeps them very natural. And Whole Foods is the main thing behind it.

So how do our listeners get these reimbursed meals today? Do they call you? Do they go to the doctors? I mean, how do our listeners get started? Yeah, this is such. A good news.

I think typically by wait until the last part to talk about this. Yeah, I think I mean, we are trying to obviously create a lot of awareness with doctors because 98% of doctors that we polled also don't know.

They say this is probably one of the best kept secrets in the health care industry. It is. Yeah. And so either doctors can call us and kind of somewhat prescribe or the clients themselves or friends and family can call.

I even have you know, sometimes people will call them, they're like, Well, I need these meals. But also my mother lives in the Midwest by herself and I would love to get her these meals so we can do because a lot of seniors qualify for the meals as well through our partnerships, the area agencies are aging and so a lot of developmental disability, there's a lot of people don't know.

There's meals covered for autism and all sorts of different programs. But for this, the population listening and interested and remission, regression of type two diabetes, that's something that they can call on www.n4lhealth.com site we have even referral forms that can be filled out that have basic information so we can check insurance and do verification checks and then we can quickly get back to a client and say, yes, your covered or your commercial plan covers this and they've agreed to let us do it.

The commercial plans are the only plans that there is a split pay because it's usually more in early stages that they cover it, whereas the Medicaid and Medicare Advantage cover 100%.

So we can quickly check that within our medical billing team and then get back to the client. And then what we do is we offer, if they're not covered by insurance, a contract rate, so they get it.

Our dietitians have really analyzed it's much cheaper than their grocery bills. So you get these prepared meals at cheaper than your grocery bills. So even cash pay is really good value proposition for people.

And it's nice again, if you're trying to care, take like for me, my father in law, we're always trying to keep him on track and he's across the country.

So getting him the meals, it's just kind of peace of mind that we know he doesn't have to think about it and worry about it. And so we have a lot of clients also that will call for also a family member.

And we do cancer support meals as well. So like if you know somebody that's going through that, we can also support through that. So there's a lot of incredible opportunities for the the actual coverage and reimbursement.

But we also try to make sure that there's no one left behind and that it's very cost effective for cash pit clients as well. That this is amazing news that I can't believe we not heard about this in a broad sense.

Right. And so be one of the first pioneers to get on this. This is reimbursable meals sent to your home. And Jennifer, you went very, very fast through the website.

Can you repeat that again? How do we find you? Yes. So you can go on our n4lhealth. So n4lhealth.com And that is where our medically tailored meals and our home delivery meals are.

You can also go on our Ecom website which is www.nutritionforlongevity.com spelled out and that has our longevity just our straight longevity diet program not necessarily the medically tailored.

So it's just more our wellness platform but save incredible meals and then you have the contract signed so you can go on that website and there's numbers that you can call to talk to our customer care team and they can do your eligibility check and see if your insurance covers or offer you a cash pay discount.

Amazing and true visionary Jennifer, CEO of Nutrition for Longevity. Thank you, Jennifer, for just telling us all these these are great news for people with Type 2 diabetes.

So thank you so I appreciate the time you spend with us. This will conclude our episode, this episode of reversing your Type 2 diabetes.