Plant Based News REACTS To Vegan vs Nutrition Coach Debate (Dr. Matthew Nagra) Transcript

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Intro and debate setup

Hey everyone, I'm with Shabnam. >> Hi everyone. [music] >> And Sara. >> Hey. >> So Sara found an awesome debate online between Dr. Matthew Nagra and nutritionist and fitness coach Arvin Daggubati on the optimal diet for health and longevity. Let's go to the clips. >> So so let's jump right into things. I guess at a high level and obviously there were you know specific claims made throughout, but at a high level what stood out was you made the claim that and I have quote, you can reach a high level as a vegan but you can't reach the creme de la creme. And then just shortly afterwards you followed that up by saying that basically on a vegan diet or plant exclusive diet you cannot quote optimize for health. And so I guess what I want to understand is is how how do you define that? Like like what would you define as this optimal health?

>> Well would you agree that um supplementing with something like creatine would help optimize health? >> Um well depends on what your definition of optimize is. That's what I'm trying to understand.

Defining optimal health

Like I don't I don't really I don't really I don't really behold to this idea necessarily of of quote unquote an optimal health. Like for example, I wouldn't say that you weren't at in good health because during that debate with Arvin you had back pain, you had to take a break, you had to stand up, right? Like I wouldn't take that to necessarily mean that you aren't in good health. Um and I [clears throat] I think that uh quote unquote optimal health or good health isn't necessarily being free of all issues at all time. It's being able to manage, navigate those issues. It's it's it's it's in flux. Um and and you know to be self-sustaining. So I mean I can I can tell you whether or not supplementing with creatine can optimize in certain uh certain realms of health, but but first I just like to understand how would you define optimal health? >> I'm just saying would it be fair to say that supplementing with creatine in all likelihood would uh help you maximize health outcomes. You may get a little better performance as far as muscular strength is concerned. You may get some cognitive benefit improvements. >> Would Would that be a fast day?

I don't think the evidence for cognition is all that strong and we can get into that, but I don't like it depends on how you define optimal health. Like if somebody factors in peak physical performance into that, then then sure. I I think for strength outcomes, yeah. But I don't know that everybody has that goal and so I I'd like to again just understand what is your definition.

>> It's It's It's not It's not about goal. It's like um if someone were to Like Like I said, if someone was to reach the creme de la creme of um health and performance, would diet Would Would supplemental creatine help them? >> Yeah, if you're considering perform- performance, yes, but like I guess let me rephrase.

How would you measure? Like if you were to take somebody and assess them, are they in or have they achieved optimal health? How would you assess that? Like what are the actual things you would look at to meet whatever that criteria is? >> I'm I'm I'm perfectly happy with whatever measurement you would want to share. See, >> Well, see No, I already said I I don't have I don't like behold to this idea of quote-unquote optimal health, right? So I I want to understand because you made the claim. You made the claim about you cannot reach optimal health. I want to understand what you mean when you say that.

>> I'm I'm I'm just I'm just I'm just trying to see if uh uh you know, we we we share some common ground here. And uh so you're you're not of the opinion that supplemental creatine is beneficial for human health, is it? >> I think it's beneficial for athletic performance. I don't know that it improves other health outcomes, but again, that is that is a that is sort of tangential to what I'm trying to get at because creatine isn't obviously there's a lot of things that were raised in that debate and a lot of it hinges on this idea of you cannot achieve quote-unquote optimal health. Now, if

your idea of optimal health is the best health outcomes in every potential category, full stop. Um then like like would you say that that's what it is? Like Is that how Okay.

>> I I guess that would be a fair statement. >> So, would you say that if you don't consume tea, that you are not achieving optimal health? Or if you don't consume coffee, that you are not achieving optimal health?

>> Possibly. There are some unique benefits that are associated with tea and coffee. Like I'm someone that encourages consuming a wide variety of foods, so that whatever unique compounds are present in a particular food, you're able to derive that. And yeah, so I would say if that is the case for tea or coffee. I'm not that familiar with the literature on tea or tea and coffee, perhaps you are.

And if you were to make the claim that tea and coffee consumption can help improve health outcomes, then I would be willing to accept that. >> Okay, so so but like let's say I'll just summarize that at a high level. Lower risk of certain cancers, lower risk of cardiovascular disease, there's compounds in tea and coffee that have unique benefits. So, I see caffeine in coffee. Understanding all of that, would you say that somebody then, by by your own standard, somebody who doesn't consume tea or coffee, is not achieving their peak health?

>> If there are some unique benefits uh associated with tea and coffee consumption, then uh they probably aren't. >> I agree with where Dr. Nagra is going here.

Plant-based diets and unique food benefits

Unless we define what the actual outcome is, we can't continue to support this claim, correct? And so, what variables or what facets fall into like optimal health? Are we just talking about strength performance, cardiovascular performance? Are we talking about longevity, cognition? There's a multitude of factors that go into this. >> So, I want to go to the second clip and keep watching. I'm intrigued. >> And we keep seeing these new breakthroughs, which kind of indicate that it's best if we don't get rid of an entire food group altogether, because as vegans, vegans don't just get rid of, let's say, something like red meat, which I would agree isn't all that great to consume. Perhaps in small doses it might be. Maybe a serving a week or whatever it is uh the data indicates. But you'll get rid of everything. You'll get rid of red meat, you'll get rid of eggs, you'll get rid of white meat, uh fish, which by the way, I think you'd agree is a health promoting food. It's it's got great great health outcomes from from the data. Uh we got honey, um and so on.

So all of these foods tend to have these array of different compounds, uh which are unique to them, um which may conquer health benefits. Uh I just want to ask you a small question if that's okay.

>> Sure. Well, um I also wanted to highlight that I I still want to see outcome data on those, but we'll get to that in a moment. But go ahead. >> Yeah, sure. Sure, sure. We'll we'll look at that, too. Um what's your position on vegan diets? Do you consider vegan diets to be the absolute best diet when it comes to maximizing health outcomes, or are you fine with consuming animal foods, too, in perhaps small doses? Like what do you think would be like if a omni- omnivore were to consider having some fish and red meat and eggs, like how much of that would be acceptable given the health outcome data, which I'm sure you're familiar with?

>> Yeah, so so I mean ethically I don't see a justification, but that aside, right looking to just at the health, um I would say that the uh the data suggests that anywhere within a plant-predominant, I can't give an exact percentage, we'll say 85-90% plant-based or more, up to plant-exclusive, can be comparably healthy. I don't think necessarily that a vegan diet is going to be more healthy than a a plant-predominant omnivorous diet with certain types of animal foods, like maybe fermented dairy, maybe fish.

Um but I also don't think a vegan diet would be detrimental in comparison to those inherently. And so that's where I take issue is the claim that that a vegan diet is inherently going to be detrimental, and I just haven't seen any data to support that with regard to the low levels of consumption of these foods that you you've mentioned. >> I think Dr. Matthew Nagra makes some really great points. Let's take the blue zones for example. We're not talking about communities that are completely fully plant-based that have some element of fish in their diet in some locations like Okinawa and the Mediterranean.

Fish, colorectal cancer, and diet comparisons

But what are you saying if the diet is predominantly plant rich, we tend to see these types of health benefits. >> There's one clip where they talk about fish. So let's go to that clip. >> You're familiar with the data on fish and colorectal cancer risk? >> Yeah.

>> So in regards to that, what is your estimate of what the literature indicates? Because from what I've seen, it seems like fish is something that is protective against colorectal cancer risk.

>> Also is dairy. Largely in in largely due to the calcium content. >> Oh, yeah. Yeah. But what about fish, you know, exclusively? >> What like I don't understand what you're at like compared to what? If you're See, here's the problem with a lot of the fish studies. When you're looking at fish consumption, it's often replacing red meat. Um now, I can't recall if those studies adjusted for red meat consumption. If they have If you can pull it up, that'd be good.

Um Now, that aside, I can grant that fish consumption in isolation, even after adjusting for red and processed meats, is associated with lower risk. I I've no problem accepting that. My question is how does that pertain to a discussion of vegan diets or or how does that demonstrate that fish consumption would be beneficial if added to a vegan diet when it comes to colorectal cancer risk simply because they didn't as far as I can see they're just for things like overall diet quality.

>> All right. You see that's the reason why I asked you Matthew. If you have any problem with consuming about one to three servings of fish because you're of the position that vegan diets and plant foods exclusively can help maximize health outcomes. But here we see that consuming about small servings of fish perhaps one to three based on what you said has an inverse association with colorectal cancer. So my position then is why not consume the fish given that we are not entirely sure what it is in the fish that's helping reduce that colorectal cancer risk. >> Because we also see that plant-based diets are associated with lower risk. >> But not as much as pescatarian diets.

>> With with for which outcome? >> For colorectal cancer risk. In fact uh >> [clears throat] >> I actually hear >> Did you mention meta? I'm sure you're familiar with the new meta which showed that vegans had a 40% higher risk of colorectal cancer.

>> Yeah, and we can do a breakdown on that. >> Yeah, there's some caveats there like I'm familiar with >> There's some major caveats there. For one they didn't adjust for BMI. They once they removed people who were diagnosed in the first four years it was no longer statistically significant. There's all sorts of problems and in that study pescatarians had what appears to be likely a statistically significant higher risk of multiple myeloma than vegetarians did.

So so great. So this this comes back to why I was asking at the beginning about the whole how do you define optimal health because we can find like even pescatarians might have worse health outcomes in certain regards.

>> They just go in circles. Dr. Nagra tries to like pin him down and be like admit it. You're just going to like speculate basically. This is what we always say about the carnivore bros as well, isn't it? There's a lot of it is based on like speculation or anecdotal evidence and like not actual longitudinal studies on what the outcomes actually are for people when they eat these diets. And Dr. Nagra is really good at just bringing it back to the science and bringing it back to the actual research. So, I appreciated he must have been frustrated in that conversation. >> So, is in conclusion fish, is it a neutral health food which one probably still to told me, is it a healthy source of calories, but then because of the mercury that makes it suboptimal?

Personally, based on a variety of data, especially all the mercury and toxins, I don't think it's a healthy food and certainly from ethical perspective, obviously very different conversation. I wouldn't consume it. What's your take?

>> I mean, that's 100% where I land with you. I think about nuclear meltdowns that have happened on the coasts and how long that takes to circumnavigate the globe multiple times for it to just enter into your food stream. And

why are we eating fish? Like, I really want to think about the nutrients that we're talking about. Are we talking about omega-3s? Are we talking about ALA? If you're talking about omega-3 fatty acids, right? Your EPA, your DHA. Alpha linoleic acid, your ALA as another omega-3 fatty acid. We can get this from like flax seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, walnuts, leafy greens. We can also get adequate levels of omega-3 from algae-based sources. So, my question is what nutrient reason are you choosing for this option, for this animal protein? Because it just doesn't align with me ethically. I think we can supplement in other ways. >> My anecdote of the day when it comes to fish is more from a direct health perspective. I got a friend who became pregnant and then she's like, "Oh my god, the doctor told me to stop eating fish cuz it's like meant to be so bad for my baby.

Mediterranean diet, supplementation, and closing thoughts

" And then given birth, now it's back onto the fish and it's like, "If it's so bad for your baby, then why is it not bad for you?" >> Mhm. It's a good point.

>> Which makes an attempt to optimize, but we don't have that data yet. Oh, no, we do. We have we have a have RCTs comparing We have two RCTs now comparing a vegan diet to a Mediterranean diet. Uh one that's designed >> 100% optimized for all the different nutrients that they I just mentioned that. >> Let's go well optimized as in fault like would you say a Mediterranean diet covers the bases that you'd be concerned about if someone's following it adequately?

>> think so. No. >> What what what would you say >> gram dollar gram >> What would be missing? What would be missing in a Mediterranean diet? >> um a bunch of unique compounds which they may not be consuming. You can mention a few foods.

What what what do they consume? Like what are the largest >> a standard Mediterranean? I'll pull I'll pull it up right now. um >> Really really really really >> hold on. Well let let let's actually do this. Let's do this instead. Design because um if you have this idea of what is optimal what covers all your bases, what is the optimal diet to you that covers all those bases? Design it.

>> I don't know. >> Well so if you don't know then what are we arguing about? You're just guessing. >> Wait wait a second. Wait a second. I won't I'm I'm I'm appealing to the fact that I don't know everything. I don't know everything about diets but I know enough about the track record of animal foods to not get rid of that and all the other food groups associated with animal foods all together. That's my position.

>> But but here's the problem with that. The problem is when I said we have we have trials two RCTs comparing a vegan diet to a Mediterranean diet. Hold on.

Allow me to allow me to finish. Allow me to finish. My main concern or your sorry your main concern was that oh well well what were they consuming? We you know we don't know if it was optimized. You're how do you know that if you can't even describe or define an optimal diet? >> me let me let me let me let me take a glance at the diet. >> Okay but hold on. Before I show it to you because I here's my here's my concern. I'm going to show it to you and then you're just going to try to pick it apart as oh they were consuming too much this and that. I want to know Hold on. Hold on. Allow me to finish why I'm explaining. I want to know now, do you have even a definition for this optimal diet? Because if you don't, I suspect it's an excuse to to bash a vegan diet.

I suspect it's Hold on. Hold on. Allow me to finish. Because no matter what I say, you're going to claim that it's not optimal based on speculation. I would like you It is It is speculation. Yeah, so it's speculation based on track record. You you called it inductive reasoning in the Arvin debate. That is speculation. It's hypothesis generating. So, I want to know Can you Can you Hold on. Hold on. Can you It is speculation and and it's I'm not saying speculation is bad, but it is speculation that requires evidence. Now, can you please describe what this optimal diet is? Do you have a definition for it? Can you tell me how to follow that? >> All these people who you're going to Uh you're going to show me the diet. What are you supplementing with creatine? >> So so in your view, you need to supplement regardless, even if you're on a Mediterranean diet. That takes That gets rid of this whole issue with with the vegan diet.

>> I'm sorry. The way Dr. Matthew Nagra has handled himself is so much better than this guy. >> Dr. Nagra is getting a little frustrated in the debate because he's like there's a lot of factors at play here.

>> This is what I was talking about. Did we come to a conclusion of what we defined as optimal diet? >> Remember >> this debate was centered around veganism. That that was the stance I was coming from or that you and Arvin were debating and that's the stance I'm coming from. So, if somebody's vegan and wants to be vegan, I see no good reason to include fish because I just see no clear evidence of benefit over getting getting you know, these compounds or or benefits from >> So so so so you're absolutely certain that we won't discover or characterize some unique component fish which would warrant consumption. >> No, but I'm not absolutely certain that the findings from these two substitution analyses showing benefit of plant protein over fish aren't actually the stronger data. So, like again, that can go in either direction.

>> Right. So, of course of course Just give me a second. I I just have to connect my charger. Yeah. Sorry about that. >> So, no. I just have no good reason to suspect that one way is going to be better than the other. Um and so So, if you're right like using your epistemic framework um and you've again, you've said this. We can we can show clips of it where if there is data suggesting potential harm and then there's the data showing neutral outcomes, you side with the data showing potential harm. With the case of fish, we have that compared to plant proteins. And so, you should by your own epistemic framework, you should avoid fish.

>> Well, that's great. I I I didn't know that. And thanks for sharing that with me. I'll I'll update my views. See, my my epistemic framework is I mean, I don't know if there's a formal name for this.

Perhaps it's a it's a Bayesian framework. But I'll I'll keep updating my stance on any position based on the data. You shared some data. I'm willing to to to modify my views based on the data that you shared. And and that's my model. Yeah. And and and and once again, and again, see, I'm I'm not going anywhere. I'll I'll be more than happy to continue this conversation with you. See the data. And if it the data is truly compelling and it does show that there's absolutely no good reason to consume small doses of these animal foods, and I'll be the first person to accept that yeah, there there isn't any good good reason.

>> I do appreciate that he said at the end, thank you for teaching me this aspect that I didn't know before, and I will take that forward into my research. So, I hope that he's being genuine about that because I find it so concerning when people spread stuff on the internet that is not fully formulated and not backed up by scientific research. That can be concerning for people who follow and watch along and listen to these online people.

>> We should give him some credit in saying that he's willing to adjust his views based off of the new data presented. And I think that's what we can hope from anyone is that there's continued growth with education. And so if the data can showcase a story that maybe doesn't support your view, to be open to it if you think that it is a valid and reliable source.

>> Thank you everybody for watching another episode of Plant Based News. Please like, comment, and subscribe, and we'll see you very soon. >> [music] [music]