Introduction and Brenda Davisu2019s Background

Welcome everybody, and thanks for joining us for this Plant Based Cancer Solutions Summit. And I have a luminary in the plant based movement here who really been studying this issue for decades.

And let me tell you a little bit about Brenda Davis, a dear friend of mine. Brenda is a registered dietitian and a plant based trailblazer and internationally acclaimed speaker.

She's been a featured speaker in medical, nutritional, and diabetic and dietetic conferences in 25 different countries on six continents. Can you believe that?

And she's authored or coauthored 13 books, the same as me. I've been an author of 13 books, too. Isn't that of something? Or we have that in common. And she has nearly a million copies in print in 12 different languages, and her most recent works include plant powered protein in 2023.

Nourish, the definitive plant based nutrition guide for families in 2020, the Kick Diabetes Essential Book and The Kick Diabetes Cookbook in 2018 and 2019, and she's past chair of the Vegetarian Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group, the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and she was the lead dietitian in the Diabetes Control Trial in the Marshall Islands, which she's very famous for.

And the paper was actually just published in September 2024, just recently. And in 2022, she was recipient of the of the Plantation Projects Luminary Award.

So we have so much in common, right? And congratulations on being inducted yourself. Thank you. And I'm so pleased to consider friends a close friend to a wonderful person.

Okay. We're seeing an increase in cancer. And we've been seeing this increase in cancer over the last 50 or so years. And now we're seeing a rising in some cancer in young adults.

So can you talk about that and why you think that's happening today. Well, I guess the to me, the biggest I mean, there are many factors, but to me the biggest factor is overeating leading to overweight and obesity.

I would put that at the very top of the list. Overweight and obesity, of course, as you well know, are linked to at least 30 types or 13 types of cancer.

And of course, the dietary pattern that's most strongly associated with overweight and obesity is the Western diet or the Sad diet, the standard American diet.

And really, that's a diet rich and alter processed foods, sweet beverages, fast foods, fried foods, animal products. And so I think that's really the overarching problem.

And of course, overeating and obesity. You know, when you end up with these massive fat stores, you're producing excess of estrogen and females. So increasing the risk of hormone driven cancers, you're increasing blood levels of insulin and IGF one, your your fueling inflammation and oxidative stress because fat cells produce all of these kinds, you know, and even you're affecting, you know, mTOR, which regulates cell proliferation and so forth and in a negative direction.

So there are a lot of reasons why it is so problematic. And you mentioned this term ultra processed foods. And you think that's a major contributor. So what if our listeners don't know what that means.

Ultra processed food. So you're saying that these ultra processed foods are the worst, but there are other bad

foods to and there are certain features of these foods that make them particular cancer promoting.

Yeah. So I mean, for those people that aren't aware of or what, you know, are really that familiar with what ultra processed foods are, they're essentially nutrient poor, energy dense, industrially processed foods made from cheap, highly refined carbohydrates like white flour, white rice, white sugar, cheap fats like hydrogenated oils, palm oil, shortening and even sometimes they have added proteins like way from milk or said protein isolate.

Why Cancer Rates Are Rising

And to make these foods look and taste like real food and of course, to enhance their shelf life, we add things like colors and flavors and artificial sweeteners and stabilizers and bulking agents into foaming agents and antiquing agents and emulsifiers and glazing agents and preservatives and and, you know, you put all of that together.

Not only have you removed most of what is a value to human health when you, you know, get these refined carbohydrates and fats and so forth. But but you add all of this crap to the food and, and and then we eat it.

And so it's, it's just so nutritionally devoid of, of anything of value. And so we're talking about things like, you know, salty snacks like chips and cheeses and sugar sweetened beverages and pre sweetened cereals and commercial baked goods like pies and cakes and cookies and pastries and processed meats and ice cream and, you know, chicken nuggets and processed cheese and ready to eat, you know, all kinds of foods and fried noodles and candy and you know, the you know the list better than anyone.

So, you know, when people are thinking that they don't consider what, you know, a chicken nugget or a pasta dish to be an ultra processed food, but it could be.

And the scary thing is that it's estimated that at least 60% of calories in the American diet come from UPF, and it's closer to 80% at the highest end.

And there was just a paper that came out 2024 that showed UPF foods are associated with 32 adverse health outcomes, including overall cancer risk and risk of six specific types of cancers, including, you know, horrible dreaded cancers like pancreatic cancer, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, leukemia, prostate cancer.

So it's, you know, it's just it's really bad news. And these things are bad news because they have such poor nutrient profiles. They, you know, contain all of this added crap.

They have high energy density. They're low in the good stuff like fiber and phytochemicals and antioxidants and all the bioactive components. They they are industrially processed and often subjected to high temperatures, you know, oxygen and heat and, and, and, you know, puffing or, you know, all of those kinds of processes that actually produce products of oxidation, like, you know, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, age, advanced glycation end products, acrylamide, accolades, even if it's animal products, heterocyclic amines, all sorts of things that are that are negative.

And then we put them in these packages. And these packages actually often contain materials that can migrate into the foods like this phenols and microplastics and mineral oils and phthalates.

And so it's it's just really not something that the human body should be consuming. But that's just to go back on that for a second. But because these are all big words and talking about the poison in there, but we're talking here about simple foods people eat all the time. Yes.

Like pretzels. Right? Like bagels. Like talon bread. Like burger buns. Like pizza. We're talking about the commercial bakers that you buy and every street corner and things people are living on.

It's like most of what they eat is this ultra processed crap, but they don't consider I don't think, you know, Italian bread and breadsticks and bagels and and donuts and cookies and rice cakes and, I don't know, whatever they guess.

I guess you walk through an airport and what what choices do you have? It's all ultra processed junk that people consider food. Right? Exactly. And you hit the nail on the head.

You know, it's food in quotation marks. It's really not food. It's food stripped of everything of value. So that's hugely problematic. And and when you see those percentages, the 60% of calories in the average American diet coming from these foods, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why cancer rates are increasing and why we're seeing people get more overweight and more cancer and all this stuff.

But yeah, weren't they eating that bad when we were kids, you know, and stuff too, when we see the people all the still eating junk food than my parents.

Sorry. Just as unhealthy, you know. Yeah, but you know what? I, I just think there wasn't as much highly or ultra processed foods I can remember as a little kid.

You know, it was fruits and vegetables and we would get treats once a week. It wasn't something that we had on a daily basis. My mom always made things like, you know, whole grain muffins and and it was mostly food made at home.

Whereas I think today there's less and less food being made at home. And so that's a big issue. It certainly is probably less vegetable consumption.

Ultra-Processed Foods and Cancer Risk

And people don't even tack grains that are cooked in water. They make these fancy things out of them. Like, you know, you know, pretzels and donut. They make stuff out of this stuff.

And, and cold cereals like fruit, they make all kinds of processed foods out of the grain today. But anyway, exactly. Until that's one of my, you know, I feel so passionate about it because I've seen so often where people, you know, switch from refined grains to whole grains, but they're eating processed whole grains.

So, you know, they're not eating intact grains like barley and quinoa. They're eating products made from ground grains and puffed grains and flaked grains.

And they're not equal to even whole week products are not good because they're not taking a wheat berry and cooking in water through a pastry flour and making it into an ultra processed food just because it has all been on it. Bang on. All right.

So what about I mean, we know the World Health Organization has talked about red meat and processed meat as of like a class one, a carcinogen or something.

But what about how how much does meat play a role in here? What about all these people advocating all this meat? And what about chicken and fish and people something they're going to reduce their cancer rates by eating chicken and fish instead of red meat.

So can you cover this in a short like summary? Yeah. So yeah, exactly. I mean, the World Health Organization declared processed meat as a Group one carcinogen, red meat as a Group two a and even, you know, one of the World Cancer research funds.

Ten you know, cancer prevention recommendations is to limit red meat and avoid processed meat. And we actually have quite an interesting 2021 systematic review and meta analysis of 148 studies that reported red meat consumption, and they looked at high as versus lowest category of intake was associated with a 25% increase in endometrial cancer, 26% increased risk of lung cancer.

I mean, it just it was close to 20% for colon and colorectal cancer, I think was just over 20%. And then they looked at, you know, processed red meat, the highest versus lowest category.

And again, it was over 20% for colon cancer colorectal cancer. And and we have another study that I think is super interesting. This one's from Japan.

This was a 2019 I believe. And there were over 70,000 participants. And they reported that cancer mortality dropped 42 when just 3% of calories from red meat was replaced with plant protein, like from tofu or legumes, and 50% when 3% of calories from processed meat was replaced with plant protein.

And just to put this into perspective, 3% of calories in a typical 2000 calorie diet is 60 calories. So that's like an ounce and a half or two of meat, or an ounce or a little more of processed meat.

So and then we, you know, how do we we don't eat this stuff raw. So when we cook red meat or even processed meats like sausages and so forth at high temperatures, you know, frying, grilling, broiling all of that stuff, we produce heterocyclic amines, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, advanced glycation end products, all of which are known carcinogens.

And so definitely problematic. And and by replacing, you know, red and processed meat with chicken and fish, I think you're taking perhaps a step in the right direction with, with fish, there's less damning evidence against fish, but still you looking at a lot of environmental contaminants, heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants.

And with chicken, it seems like we produce as much or if not more of the products of oxidation when we grill chicken, then compare compared to red meat.

So so they're not, you know, they're not innocuous by any stretch of the imagination. So it seems that even though the diets of yesteryear may have been not that great, not only are we eating worse, but we're also having more pollutants and more toxins in the environment.

And those environmental toxins further concentrate in animal products. Have not, you know, compared to an apple, you know, or but especially persistent organic pollutants move up the food chain, you know.

So I mean pesticides may be a little bit different, but persistent organic pollutants like dioxins and PCBs and so forth move up the food chain and are definitely the most concentrated in, in, you know, animal products.

What do you think that with all this information, all the science we have, it's almost overwhelmingly indicting to these unhealthy foods, yet we're not having any enrolled into people changing their habits.

In fact, where does the keto die in the carnivore diet? And all these people advocating you thought it would have gone out with Atkins? You know, 20 years ago when Atkins, you know, fell down and smacked his head and died of a heart attack?

You know, of course, people say he fell and hit his head. But, you know, we know he he had heart problems. He's probably why he fell. But the point is, with all these premature deaths mode these people out of advocating Quito and, and high animal product diets, and we have all this evidence today showing how dangerous it is.

Yet these diet styles flourish. And their argument would be if they were listening. Oh yeah, those studies are meaningless because they're on bad animal products.

That's commercially raised animal products, not the good animal products that are raised on grass or something, or floating around in the woods. You know, they always they don't realize, of course.

Yes, the studies on those animal products do. But what would you say to them? They're always going to be critical of the studies. They just seem to ignore reality, right?

They do. And the reality is that probably 99% of the meat consumed in North America is from animals in confined that have been raised in confined animal, animal feeding operations or CAFOs.

And the, you know, people don't have the same kind of access to what we would think of as healthier animal products, like what our ancestors were able to get that maybe had 10% fat, the antelopes running around, or the other wild animals that have more omega threes, less fat, and so forth.

Those aren't the animals people have access to anymore. And and to me, I would say, take a look at every single major health organization on land, pretty much in every cancer organization.

Look at the recommendations of most national nutrition recommendations.

Meat, Fish, and Dairy in Cancer Prevention

And you see over and over and over again that we need to be consuming mostly plants, more plants, less animal products. We need to be consuming plant based diets because plants are where the compounds that are associated with reduced risk of disease are concentrated the fiber, the phytochemicals, the antioxidants, the micronutrients are concentrated in these foods.

And so it makes absolutely no sense to say we shouldn't be eating these foods. And I think it's it's going to be, you know, time will tell the tale. But I think that the people who are eating carnivore and keto and so forth are, are, are going to be having very much increased rates of a variety of cancers and chronic diseases in the long run.

I know they're eliminating a lot of the ultra processed, you know, flower products and so forth, but they're concentrating the other category of foods that are problematic, which is the animal products.

Yeah, I have like two comments to add to that. As number one, it's true that animal products of yesteryear maybe a little better. But many of these studies, most of them actually, that show the dangers of these animal products are done in other countries where they eat wild and grass fed animal products.

And we're not seeing an advantage of lower rates of these diseases when they're studying those animal products. So it is the heterocyclic amines, the cooking, the animal protein that ions, the all the, you know, all that we could talk about all the pro-inflammatory compounds and the growth hormones and the IG one promotion in humans, all these things that cause cancer are not going to be taken away from natural animal products.

And the other second comment is we now have ten solid, large scale studies show that people on keto diets have much higher risk of premature death. 30% we're talking about in, in in the some of these major studies showed that the shortest lifespans were the people following keto diets, and they did have increased risk of cancers in later life.

So that's already now been corroborated by eight different studies that have come out in the last four years. You know. Yeah. And, you know, when we look at carbohydrate intakes and, and risk of death, the, the people eating the lowest carbohydrate diets consistently have higher risk of death.

Yeah. That's very important for people to recognize that more animal protein leads to more risk of premature death. And more plant protein leads to increased lifespan.

And the word more plant protein means more vegetables, more beans, more nuts and seeds. There is a high protein plant. Foods that we advocate have anti-cancer perfects not just because they're protein adequate, but because they take all the other elements of that prevent against cancer.

Exactly. All right. So what about let's we didn't we left out dairy products. Maybe you should just we should cover that a little bit too. Yeah. So dairy products I think the results regarding dairy consumption and cancer are more mixed than they are for other animal products.

So we see some pretty convincing evidence that dairy increases risk of prostate cancer because dairy does increase its one levels, which promotes prostate cancer growth.

On the other hand, a lot of studies have shown that dairy appears to reduce the risk of colorectal cancer because

of the calcium and vitamin D that it contains.

But there was a study just from 2022 from China that reported increased risk of breast and liver cancer, with the highest in lymphoma, as well in the highest dairy consumers.

And so I you know, to me, it just makes a whole lot more sense to be using nondairy products like unsweetened. So I melt, for example, rather than dairy products, which are problematic in terms of cancer risk generally, even though there may be cancer lowering potential for colorectal cancer.

Right. And certainly they're not phytochemicals in rich. But in any case know exactly. Yeah. And saturated fat of course allow cancer cells to grow cancer cell replication and growth.

You know, we have this idea of dairy and trying to eat more plant based milks, particularly hemp milk and sewing milk and almond milk. But there's a group out there of people being, like, brainwashed to think that soy is linked to cancer.

So maybe if we're talking about more plant based milk. Maybe touch briefly on the this myth that soy products cause cancer and what they what the studies really do show.

Yeah. And I think we have just massive amount of, of information on soy. And there is no question that soy, rather than being detrimental, is helpful in terms of cancer risk reduction.

I think the evidence is actually overwhelming. And there was a systematic review and meta analysis in 2024 that included 52 studies and close to a million participants, and they found the highest total soy intake was associated with a 31% reduced risk of total cancer and a high consumption of tofu they looked at.

Tofu specifically, was associated with a 22% reduced risk and a high consumption of soy milk, a 25 reduced risk. So I mean, and we know that soya reduces, you know, probably reduces risk of breast cancer, reduces risk of recurrence, it reduces risk of prostate cancer.

And and there are, you know, some other cancers that it seems to be helpful for as well. So I just think the evidence is so strong that that soy is is helpful, not harmful.

And in fact, many of the the major cancer organizations no longer warn people with breast cancer to avoid. So they say it's it's, you know, not problematic and probably protective.

Sure. Just another myth that's been this billions of dollars spent by the meat industry to try to come up with ways of directing people away from plant based diets.

One of the all these myths. So, okay, what about this idea of people eating organic? Okay. They're eating healthy. They got the message nodding ultra processed food, but eating a lot of fruits and vegetables.

Now, how important it is for them to eat organic. Well, you know, the evidence isn't absolutely conclusive. But we do know pesticides can increase cancer risk.

And the evidence linking pesticides to cancer is really strongest for workers who are applying pesticides. But there is evidence for increased risk of breast cancer for leukemia among children.

You have to remember, children have such small bodies that it can accumulate a lot more quickly and per pound of body weight. So I think it makes sense to do what we can to minimize our exposure.

But that having been said, you know, we want to choose organic foods when we can, but unfortunately we don't always have access to to those foods. And for some people they're just not affordable.

So what we can do is wash our produce, wash it in baking soda.

Soy, Organic Foods, and Pesticide Exposure

Water solution seems to be especially helpful, but I don't think we should necessarily avoid conventional produce because of pesticides if we can't afford organic.

Because the evidence to me seems stronger, that we need to maximize our intakes of vegetables and fruits than it is that we need to consume 100% organic fruits and vegetables.

I think if you have cancer, you may want to try to lean in that direction as far as possible, though. And so you're saying you mix baking soda in with the warm water in the sink, and then you watch the vegetables in that.

Exactly. And there have been a number of, you know, people who have looked at different, you know, techniques. Vinegar seems to be somewhat effective, but baking soda seems to be the most effective.

So that that's one thing people can do if they're buying conventional produce to try to minimize their intake of pesticides. Sure. And certainly the foods that have like a lot of surface area, like leafy greens and stuff think, I know strawberries are particularly dangerous to eat.

Important organic. Yes. And of course we're. What? What are you do you give people an alcohol? Well, you know, that's a really easy one because evidence is overwhelming that the safest amount of alcohol to consume is zero.

And, you know, even the World Health Organization says there's no safe amount that doesn't affect health. Alcohol, like processed red meat, is a Group one carcinogen.

And it's a, you know, alcohol intake is associated with at least seven types of cancer, mainly like mouth, upper throat, larynx, esophagus, breast, liver, bowel.

And and it doesn't really, you know, matter how much you drink, the risk is like the first drop of alcohol you consume increases your risk. So the only thing we can say for sure is the more you drink, the more harmful it is, I think.

And alcohol increases cancer risk because it damages cells. And it it's broken down into acetyl aldehyde, which builds up in cells and damages our DNA.

And it prevents cells from repairing damage. But it impacts hormones like estrogen and insulin. It makes it easier for cells in the mouth and throat to absorb harmful chemicals.

It eases the transfer of harmful chemicals into body cells. It just is bad news. So we really do want to minimize or avoid alcohol. Sure, it's so culturally and indigenous to young people in this country.

It's crazy. It's really unfortunate. Yeah. All right. Now probably the last thing we maybe should go over in depth is a little more detail is the fact that people are measuring their blood glucose at Crandall, blood glucose with these machines today, they're recognizing the link between process carbohydrates and high blood sugars with cancer and short lifespan.

But I think they're a little bit going off the rail and getting a little bit confused about this and thinking that carbohydrates are just generally bad.

And we're making it clear that it's there's a way different effect of prostate processed carbohydrates. But just talk about carbohydrates a little more.

And the effect on blue codes before we leave this subject. Yeah. Well, you know it. Carbohydrates probably 90% of the carbohydrates people consume in North America are not good news.

They're highly processed, ultra processed, a carbohydrates. And so, you know, you can think of something like

white flour that we use to make all sorts of things.

Of course, when you make white flour, you remove two of the three parts of the the kernel of wheat. You remove the brand and the germ. And that's where all the good stuff is, the fiber and phytochemicals and micronutrients and so on and so on.

And then you don't just eat a bowl of white flour, you add all of the sugar and fat and salt and additives and so on. And then you eat the white flour.

And so it's it's like a double whammy. And, and, and and so the and and as we process these carbohydrates in this way we're increasing the surface area of, of the food.

And we're increasing the rate at which it will be absorbed into the bloodstream. And so that's, you know, that's that's an issue. And so when you eat a like let's say you just boil wheat berries or berries or spelt berries or barley for your body to break that down.

It will happen very, very slowly. It's got a lot of fiber. It's, you know, it's it's it's in a form that takes your body a long time to absorb. So it's got a very low glycemic that like a shell over it.

Practically. Right. Yeah. Exactly. And so it takes a long time to digest and absorb. So we get this very gradual increase in blood sugar after we eat these whole grains.

And whereas when we eat, you know, ground grains, we get a much more rapid increase in blood sugar. And, and you know, I myself, I think you and I eat very similarly.

Alcohol and Carbohydrates: Blood Sugar and Cancer

And so my breakfast is, you know, I always have a lot of berries and fruit. I often make a, you know, chia pudding to for a little creaminess, but I always add some intact grains, so, you know, berries or barley or something like that.

I put seeds and nuts on top, unsweetened soy milk, and then I make a dehydrated granola because I like a little crunch with it. Always put a lot of omega three rich seeds.

So I have a combination of flax, chia, hemp, pumpkin seeds, you know, so that all goes on top. And so it's a wonderfully filling meal. It's it's interesting because I have friends that used to have rolled oats all the time, and they said when they switched from rolled oats to an intact grain for breakfast, they just couldn't believe how much longer it kept them saying.

They said I was, you know, I was always hungry by 1030 or 11. Now I'm never hungry before noon. So it you know, that's talking about, oh, you're talking about steel cut oats and oat groats.

What. Well, give me the. Exactly. So, so, so for oats at the top of the hierarchy would be oak growth. And then the next level down would be steel cut outs because they'd been cut.

And then we roll them and then shred and then grind and then flake and then puffed. And as we go down that hierarchy, we're increasing the surface area.

We're increasing exposure to heat, light, oxygen, pressure, all of that. So we're diminishing nutritional value increasing surface area. And so we want to stay as close to the top as we can.

And so the optimal would be oak groat. Next best would be steel cutlets which are still a very good option. So how do you cook your old growth. So you put it like one cup of oak roach to two cup two and a half cups of water.

And how long does it take to cook. Yeah. So I often cook. If I do oak groats as my breakfast cereal, I'll do oak roads mixed with quinoa and small brown lentils.

And so I cook the three together and I'll cook at a low temperature for probably 45 minutes to an hour and across. Ida. What do you mean, no, just in a pot. It's going to pop.

How much water do you add? You know what? I have to be really honest. I just know by feel how much I need. But I would probably put about three times the amount of grains and lentils in water.

It's about two and a half cups of water to one cup of yeah, at least. Maybe it's funny, I should have brought it right out here because I have that same I have the that glass jar in my refrigerator where I have ground Shia and ground flax ground him and I just have it all made, all ground up in my Vitamix.

I put it right on my, you know, on my morning actually, what I do, and I love the combination of throwing a little bit of lentils into that breakfast bowl because you really don't taste them.

But it adds that fiber and iron and zinc and just, you know, that that satiety as well, getting the little bit of, you know, legume into the mix. All right. Good.

All right. So to wrap this up we've talked about all the negatives and all that and some positive give me before we leave like 2 or 3 more minutes. What are the other besides adding a little bit of lentils to the old growth.

Some of the seeds and the berries and all that? Give me a few other superfoods that you want people to eat regularly, that they can, that they can put into their breakfast, their lunch or dinner now. Yeah.

So so my lunch is always a giant salad. So organic greens and kale and, you know, watercress and sprouts I grow sprouts on my counter. So I just finished growing three, you know, lentil sprouts sunflower sprouts and pea shoots.

And so those are all going the salad. I always add a little bit of red cabbage to it. And then, you know, if you can add arugula or walk toy or something like that, that's great too.

And then I try to get every color of the rainbow so red, orange, yellow. So all of the colors of different vegetables are there. And and then I always make a seed or nut based dressing.

So and I know you do that as well. So tahini hemp seeds fresh lemon. You know that's my standard dressing. And and then to make it a full meal.

Practical Plant-Based Meals and Closing Remarks

And I think this is a really important point. I always have some starch and some protein. So for protein I might have some hummus and some, you know, baked tofu or some beans and, you know, usually two protein sources.

And then I'll also have some starts. So today it was butternut squash. And so it'll be cubed and put on. And then you know often will also add one fruit.

So today it was pomegranate seeds. Sometimes it's blueberries. But I'll have a little bit of fruit at it as well. And that's lunch. And I almost always have an orange as my dessert at lunchtime.

And, and then supper is is often a cooked meal. So just to think of what we had last night, baked tofu, I had purple cauliflower broccolini and baked squash.

So the baked butternut squash is what was on the salad today. The leftover baked squash and I made a cheese sauce out of, you know, a cheesy sauce out of cashews and roasted red peppers.

And so that's, you know, just to add a little pizzazz to the meal. And so that's basically how I eat. I do a lot of stews, a lot of soups and, and try to avoid the high temperature cooking as much as possible.

Terrific. All right. Well, we got a lot done in a short period of time. We covered a lot. And I think it's really important

that everybody heard this.

And well thanks again so much for participating here. Well, thank you so much for inviting me, Joel. And it was such fun to get to visit with you and to be part of this wonderful event.

Thank you. Terrific. All right. Take care everybody. See ya. See you next time. See you tomorrow. All right. Bye bye.