Letter by Kasprowicz et al Regarding Article, “Reducing Sodium Intake to Prevent Stroke: Time for Action, Not Hesitation”

To the Editor:

The article by Appel1 entitled “Reducing Sodium Intake to Prevent Stroke: Time for Action, Not Hesitation” provides a call to action that diet modification is a cost effective and clinically relevant component of our prevention and management of chronic disease and stroke. The author notes a potential profound impact of widespread nutrition intervention and that a 4% annual reduction in sodium intake for 10 years could prevent 30,000 to 83,000 stroke-related deaths. We agree with Appel’s conclusion and offer a concrete step to move the American medical community from hesitation to action.

There is a larger problem limiting the ability of providers to offer effective nutrition counseling that patients can easily integrate into their lives. Studies have demonstrated that a large proportion of medical students and professionals are inadequately prepared to provide meaningful nutrition counseling.2-3 Recommending that physicians continue to counsel their patients on nutrition is hollow unless adequate emphasis is placed on properly preparing medical professionals to offer meaningful advice and prescription. Only 27% of medical schools currently achieve the minimum 25 hours of instruction in nutrition to properly preparing medical professionals to offer meaningful advice and prescription. Only 27% of medical schools currently achieve the minimum 25 hours of instruction in nutrition counseling.2-3 Since 2012, Tulane’s novel Center for Culinary Medicine presents a compelling and needed model for nation-wide expansion as its curriculum is adopted by an increasing number of medical schools to correct the knowledge and skill deficit faced by many medical students and physicians. If the time for action is now, the nutrition message from physicians needs to be descriptive and not prescriptive.

Disclosures

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Eric Kasprowicz, MS
Dominique J. Monlezun, BA
Timothy S. Harlan, MD
The Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine
Tulane University School of Medicine
New Orleans, LA

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Eric Kasprowicz, Dominique J. Monlezun and Timothy S. Harlan

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