



A researcher's sweet truths

It's March, so once again it is "Nutrition Month." With this in mind, we would like to highlight a University of Hawaii nutritionist, Dr. Dian Dooley, whose research focuses on nutrition education, along with how nutrition affects behavior.

Dooley has a broad educational background. She first majored in chemistry at the University of California, Davis, and after raising a family, she obtained both master's and doctoral degrees in nutritional science from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Her Ph.D. minor was in sociology.

While doing research for her doctorate, Dooley studied the behavioral and nutritional effects of sugar on aggressive adolescent behavior. Contrary to popular belief, she found that sugar did not cause increased aggressiveness in teenage males. In fact, sugar had a calming effect on certain subgroups of teens who had been incarcerated in a boys school.

The sugar allowed them to do better on tests that measured impulsiveness and ability to pay attention.

From a physiological perspective, this was not so surprising. Sugar is the brain's major energy source. Maintaining normal blood sugar levels, from any carbohydrate source (sugar or starch), is likely to assist brain function.

Many commonly accepted nutrition ideas have a life of their own, despite the presence of reliable contradictory information. To help quash these misconceptions, Dooley works as a liaison between the world of science and the media, serving as a national food science communicator for the Institute of Food Technologists, as one of two nutrition editors for HMSA's Island Scene magazine and answering questions on the national Mad Scientist Network. She also speaks to community groups about food and nutrition.

We asked Dooley what she thought people were most con-

fused about regarding nutrition. Her response: "Too much information is not always a good thing. Today, the huge amount of nutrition information available to people is causing a number of problems. Some of the information is good, some is bad, and some is just confusing and contradictory. This makes it very difficult for people to determine what is worth doing and what is not."

She suggests instead providing simple, practical and consistent information such as the advice her graduate advisor, Dr. Alfred Harper, used to give: Maintain appropriate, healthful body weight and eat a variety of foods (and enjoy eating).

Following these suggestions would put people way ahead in the game of health. Maintaining a healthy weight requires staying fit, and variety is the spice of life that increases your chances of getting all the good things in wholesome foods.

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