

Doc causes controversy promoting vegan diet

By Anahad O'Connor, New York Times

Kim A. Williams, the president-elect of the American College of Cardiology, often sees patients who are overweight and struggling with hypertension, Type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol. One of the things he advises them to do is to change their diets.

Specifically, he tells them to go vegan.

Williams became a vegan in 2003 because he was concerned that his LDL cholesterol – the kind associated with an increased risk of heart disease – was too high. The doctor wrote about his reasons for going vegan and his belief in the cardiovascular benefits of a plant-based diet in a recent essay at MedPage Today.

Veganism has grown in popularity in recent years, reflected by the explosion of meat-free cookbooks and restaurants, and vegan-friendly products in grocery stores. But the endorsement by the man who is set to become the president of one of the country's leading cardiology associations, which helps formulate health policies and guidelines, did not strike a totally positive chord.

One person suggested he was promoting a radical diet to his patients based on the experience of a single person: himself. Others accused him of trying to get the college of cardiology to encourage everyone to go vegan, which he dismissed. And some critics suggested that Williams and the college were “unduly influenced by industry,” which baffled him.

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