

Doctors can help stop the spread of fake food news

By Kiera Butler, Mother Jones

When journalist and physician James Hamblin investigated the world of gluten-free products, he found a \$23 billion industry of “detox courses,” custom blood tests, and specially formulated foods. What he didn’t find was medical evidence that avoiding gluten is good for people who don’t have celiac disease.

In fact, the many gastroenterologists that he interviewed agreed that gluten-free diets can actually be less healthy than those that contain gluten. So how did the craze take hold if there’s essentially no science to back it up?

That’s one question that Hamblin attempts to answer in his new book, “If Our Bodies Could Talk: A Guide to Operating and Maintaining a Human Body,” and during our interview on *Mother Jones*’ food politics podcast Bite. Hamblin, also a senior editor at the *Atlantic*, argues that the gluten-free trend—along with many other health fads—is “a symptom of a real problem within the medical establishment.”

Up until a few decades ago, he explains, patients regarded their doctors as the ultimate health authorities—they trusted physicians to make recommendations based on the latest science. But “as the ethical principle of patient autonomy has gained recognition, medicine has lurched toward patient-doctor collaboration,” Hamblin writes.

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