

# Culinary medicine: The new 'in' thing?

*MGMA does not endorse any solutions put forth in this column. We urge readers to explore the legal issues – federal, state and local – that may arise from a particular course of action.*

By Michelle Mudge-Riley,  
DO, MHA, MGMA member

Life in north Texas (where I live) just got a lot more fun. I've discovered culinary medicine and the value it brings to physicians, physician staff and patients. It started with some research I did for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Washington, D.C., on how much nutrition education physicians get in medical school and training. Not much, it turns out. Most medical schools didn't provide more than 21 hours of nutrition education for doctors, according to a landmark 1985 report by the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> Another study<sup>2</sup> published in the journal *Academic Medicine* in 2010 found that only 27% of medical schools provided the standard of 25 hours of nutrition education established by the National Academy of Sciences. Some medical schools provided even fewer hours.

Culinary medicine is the latest method of teaching doctors and patients how to combine the art of cooking with evidence-based nutritional research to help people understand how to purchase, prepare and enjoy healthy and delicious meals.

That got me thinking: Doctors have a lot on their plates and nutrition news comes out on almost a daily basis. To determine how many practices talk with patients about their food choices and how that affects their health, I came up with the following questions:

- How many doctors are knowledgeable about the latest scientific evidence that distinguishes healthy foods?
- Do most practices successfully engage patients to improve their food choices and lifestyles and see improved patient outcomes?
- Can physicians serve as role models to engage and change the way their patients and staff think about purchasing, preparing and enjoying the right foods for best health?

This is the fourth article in a series. Read previous articles in this series: [mgma.org/becoming-an-RD](http://mgma.org/becoming-an-RD), [mgma.org/hiring-an-RD](http://mgma.org/hiring-an-RD).

- Do practice professionals know they can get reimbursed for group classes?

Then I learned about Dr. Gourmet<sup>3</sup>, also known as Timothy Harlan, MD, an internal medicine physician who was a chef before going to medical school. Harlan, who is the assistant dean of clinical services at Tulane University School of Medicine, New Orleans, and executive director of the Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine, wants to add teaching kitchens to all medical schools. The idea is that medical students and physicians who know how to cook and eat well will be more effective in talking about nutrition with their patients. He uses evidence-based data and culinary demonstrations to show how to prepare certain foods and create healthy, delicious meals that fit with the goals of decreasing chronic disease and associated risk factors for chronic disease. I jumped on that bandwagon.

Fast-forward eight months. I did a culinary demonstration at a group practice for a group of 20 patients – men and woman who were interested in substituting healthier ingredients for unhealthy ones. They wanted a tasty (and healthy) chocolate pudding. My goal was simple: Figure out how to create a healthy chocolate pudding. I wasn't allowed to take shortcuts like using the sugar-free Jell-O brand pudding instead of the regular stuff. This had to be all natural, healthy and delicious.

The event drew more than 20 patients, family members and a few doctors who wanted to learn how to combine the science of nutrition with the reality of delicious and healthy food. I was pleased to see many raised eyebrows when I explained that one of the ingredients was avocados. Yes, that's right – avocados and unsweetened cocoa were the main ingredients in this all-natural chocolate pudding. Both contain a host of vitamins and antioxidants.

Culinary medicine is the latest method of teaching doctors and patients how to combine the art of cooking with evidence-based nutritional research to help people understand how to purchase, prepare and enjoy healthy and delicious meals.



It allows doctors to serve as role models and lets coaches engage patients and help them change behaviors to bring about measurable health outcomes for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Doctors can get reimbursed by insurance companies for this training and reap the benefits of value-based reimbursement because they can report improved metrics in patients who have chronic diseases. And since 70% to 80% of chronic diseases (heart disease, stroke and diabetes) and more than 40% of cancers are preventable, who knows how many health issues could be avoided with just one group class. ■

Contact Michelle Mudge-Riley at [mudgeriley@yahoo.com](mailto:mudgeriley@yahoo.com).

Notes:

1. National Academy of Sciences: [nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=597](http://nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=597). Accessed July 2014.
2. Adams KMI, Kohlmeier M, Zeisel SH. Nutrition education in U.S. medical schools: Latest update of a national survey. *Academic Medicine*. Vol. 85, No. 9, September 2010: 1537-42.
3. Dr. Gourmet: [drgourmet.com](http://drgourmet.com).

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE™ Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

**MGMA Connection (November)** | 1537-0445 | 10 - 1 - 14

1. Issue Frequency: 10X per year / monthly | 10

2. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 10/01/2014

3. Issue Title: MGMA Connection (November)

4. Issue Number: 10

5. Issue Period: 10/01/2014 - 10/31/2014

6. Issue Street Address: 104 Ingenuity Terrace East, Englewood, CO 80112

7. Issue City, State, and ZIP+4: Englewood, CO 80112

8. Issue Country: United States

9. Issue ISSN: 1537-0445

10. Issue Filing Date: 11/11/2014

11. Issue Frequency Code: 10 (10X per year / monthly)

12. Issue Date Code: 10 (October)

13. Issue Page Count: 32

14. Issue Price Code: 00 (Free)

15. Issue Price: \$0.00

16. Issue Circulation: 24,000

17. Issue Circulation Code: 02 (Total)

18. Issue Circulation Description: Total (Sum of 19-21)

19. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run): 24,000

20. Total Number of Copies (Gross Press Run): 24,000

21. Total Number of Copies (Net Distribution): 24,000

22. Total Number of Copies (Gross Distribution): 24,000

23. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

24. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

25. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

26. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

27. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

28. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

29. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

30. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

31. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

32. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

33. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

34. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

35. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

36. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

37. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

38. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

39. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

40. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

41. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

42. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

43. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

44. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

45. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

46. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

47. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

48. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

49. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

50. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

51. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

52. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

53. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

54. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

55. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

56. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

57. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

58. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

59. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

60. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

61. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

62. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

63. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

64. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

65. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

66. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

67. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

68. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

69. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

70. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

71. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

72. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

73. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

74. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

75. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

76. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

77. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

78. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

79. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

80. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

81. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

82. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

83. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

84. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

85. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

86. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

87. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

88. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

89. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

90. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

91. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

92. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

93. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

94. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000

95. Total Number of Copies (Net Circulation): 24,000

96. Total Number of Copies (Gross Circulation): 24,000

97. Total Number of Copies (Net Availability): 24,000

98. Total Number of Copies (Gross Availability): 24,000

99. Total Number of Copies (Net Production): 24,000

100. Total Number of Copies (Gross Production): 24,000