Science points the way back to nature

Medical school offers New Zealanders certified course in glyconutrition

J ust as Dr. Luis Romero began his weeklong tour to educate New Zealanders about the importance of proper nutrition, newspaper headlines announced that the nation had the world’s second-highest rate of childhood obesity. “It’s critical to New Zealand and other nations that people begin to take responsibility for their health,” said Dr. Romero, a volunteer associate professor of medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine – Division of Complementary Medicine. “We have to make wellness the trend of the future.”

To accomplish that goal, Dr. Romero and the Miller School of Medicine have created the first certified course in nutrition for consumers. The course, Basics in Glycobiology, is designed to make each person an expert in wellness. Dr. Romero and the Miller school believe so strongly in the role glyconutrients play in achieving optimal health that he recently completed a nine-city tour of Australia and New Zealand alerting the public to this new, burgeoning nutritional technology.

“We’ve had a handful of critical discoveries in medical science, such as the microscope and antibiotics, that have impacted world health,” Dr. Romero said. “My professional opinion is that the newly identified glyconutrients are a necessity that have the potential to recapture health and wellness as the norm for humanity.”

Only recently, it seems, has humanity lost the art of consuming a proper diet. For members of ancient hunter-gatherer tribes, scientists believe, as much as 80 percent of dietary intake came from plant sources — most of which was freshly gathered and uncooked. Although we might delight in starting our day with tea and coffee and toast, our ancestors might have preferred freshly dug roots and edible plant gums. A light lunch probably not approve if they saw you foraging for roots among the wisterias. But relax – no need to go to desperate lengths. Mannatech, the global maker of proprietary glyconutritional supplements and wellness products, aims to provide wholesome nutrients in a form that’s practical and cost-effective for consumers.

“So what are we moderns to do? The neighbors would probably not approve if they saw you foraging for roots among the wisterias. But relax – no need to go to desperate lengths. Mannatech, the global maker of proprietary glyconutritional supplements and wellness products, aims to provide wholesome nutrients in a form that’s practical and cost-effective for consumers.”

“We design our products according to what we call ‘intelligent supplementation’,” says Robert Sinnott, M.N.S., Ph.D., Mannatech’s chief science officer. “It’s very simple and straightforward: You just have to take a limited number of high-quality products, in amounts that make sense for your needs.”

Key to Mannatech’s approach is the concept of glyconutrients, which addresses wellness at the fundamental level of molecules and cells, rather than focusing on illnesses after they arise.

In recent years science has made great leaps in understanding what the body requires from food intake. As with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients whose important roles have long been established, research has uncovered the critical function of saccharides — plant-based sugars that aid every organ of the body by providing a signaling mechanism between cells.

“Cell-to-cell communication occurs through patterns of sugars on different molecules, like letters in an alphabet,” says Dr. Sinnott. “By interacting with each other, molecules can tell whether a cell is a part of your own body or whether it’s a foreign invader, such as a fungus, virus or bacteria.”

Numerous studies now support the theory that certain essential sugars are lacking in modern diets. The 1996 edition of Harper’s Biochemistry contained an entire chapter on plant-derived carbohydrates that it said are essential to a properly functioning immune system. Over the years, some of the world’s most prestigious science journals — Science, New Scientist, Scientific American — have published studies marveling at the evolving science of glycobiology. One of America’s premier research institutes called this evolving science “one of 10 emerging technologies that will change the world.”

Mannatech’s core products capitalize on this science. The same year Harper’s introduced the idea of essential plant sugars, Mannatech launched its Ambrotose® complex, a unique formulation of plant-based sugars that support the body’s immune system. Twenty patents — including one from New Zealand in 2001 — have been issued to Mannatech for the technology related to the Ambrotose formulation.

“Plants are the ultimate source of all polysaccharides, and the diets of prehistoric humans included several grams daily,” says Ms. Ramberg. “Many of these vital sugars are deficient from our modern diets.”

Many people, including New Zealand icon Michael Campbell, know this. That’s why he and other athletes worldwide endorse Mannatech’s glyconutritional products as a way to supplement their diets. In addition to winning the 2005 U.S. Open, Campbell was recently awarded the Halberg Sporting Award and the Sportsman of the year award.

While the theory of glyconutrients may initially be hard to grasp, at Mannatech the answer to dietary deficiencies is not so complicated: The company simply puts science to work at finding the best nutrients in nature, which was, after all, humanity’s original food pantry.

Dr. Romero, who is not affiliated with Mannatech, and who previously worked with the World Health Organization, often cites a 2003 W.H.O. report on diet and nutrition, which states: “. . . scientific evidence (is) increasingly supporting the view that alterations in diet have strong effects, both positive and negative, on health throughout life.”

Information on certified course in glyconutrition available at www.humanitasusa.com

Next Saturday:
Here’s to our health: In an uncertain world, Mannatech helps consumers take charge

* Supplementary to and not a replacement for balanced diet.