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September 21st is World Alzheimer's Day

Cognitive Decline and Dementia are NOT Inevitable Consequences of Getting Older. Here's How to Fight It.

COLUMBIA, S.C. (September 21, 2020)--With the aging of the population we see a rise in the rates of Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and cognitive decline. But there is good news. "Aging is inevitable for every organism that continues to live," according to Dr. James Hébert, Professor at the University of South Carolina and President of Connecting Health Innovations (CHI), "but disease and disability are not the inevitable consequences of getting older."

Over the past six years, Dr. Hébert and his team have published 30 papers linking dietary inflammation to conditions related to aging including cognitive decline, memory loss, depression, telomere shortening, fractures and frailty. Concurrently, studies by other scientists from around the world have also shown a strong connection between dietary inflammation and these conditions.

"We now know that as diets become more pro-inflammatory the rates and severity of these conditions increase," Dr. Hébert explained further. "So, the scientific literature on the role of diet, and diet-associated inflammation in particular, on conditions related to aging is strong and consistent."

Alzheimer's disease has long been understood to be a serious public health challenge. But a definitive diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease can only be certain after a sufferer dies and an autopsy is performed. Yet Dr. Hébert maintains that this does not prevent us from fully understanding what causes Alzheimer's and other mental conditions that afflict people at higher rates as they get older. "We know that what we see for dementia in general and cognitive decline applies to Alzheimer's disease. All of these conditions are strongly related to diets that are pro-inflammatory."

Such diets are characterized by a high concentration of processed, high-fat, salty and sweet foods, and low intakes of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. An anti-inflammatory diet is recommended by health experts for people of all ages, but the evidence indicates that it is even more important for people as they get older. "Elderly individuals are at unique disadvantages because they often have low levels of physical activity," said Dr. Hébert. "This means that their total food intake is low which, in turn, places them at high risk of nutritional deficiencies."

So, what does Dr. Hébert recommend as we get older? Maybe surprisingly, his first recommendation is to eat foods that are pleasing to our senses. If we are not enjoying healthy

foods, we will not eat them. Fortunately, anti-inflammatory diets tend to be colorful and flavorful and nutrient-dense. So, we obtain a lot of nutrients for an equivalent amount of calories from highly processed foods. Secondly, he advises to increase physical activity. This has a direct effect on cognition. Physical activity and diet work together to reduce muscle loss and deposition of fat tissue.

“These are all simple-sounding recommendations but not always easy to implement,” Dr. Hébert admitted. “As a result, people often need real, concrete plans to improve diet, increase physical activity and stress reduction practices. CHI’s products will help individuals to understand where they are now on the anti- to pro-inflammatory continuum and the means to realize where you want to be.”

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About Connecting Health Innovations (CHI): CHI was founded in 2013 as a spin-off company at the University of South Carolina focused on the work spearheaded by Harvard-educated Dr. James Hébert on the effects of inflammatory diets on health. Dr. Hébert is the inventor of the Dietary Inflammatory Index™ (DII®) and through his company, offers a growing variety of products and services to combat dietary inflammation and improve health and wellness. CHI is the definitive resource for evidence-based and peer-reviewed information about dietary inflammation and its effects on the body and society as a whole.