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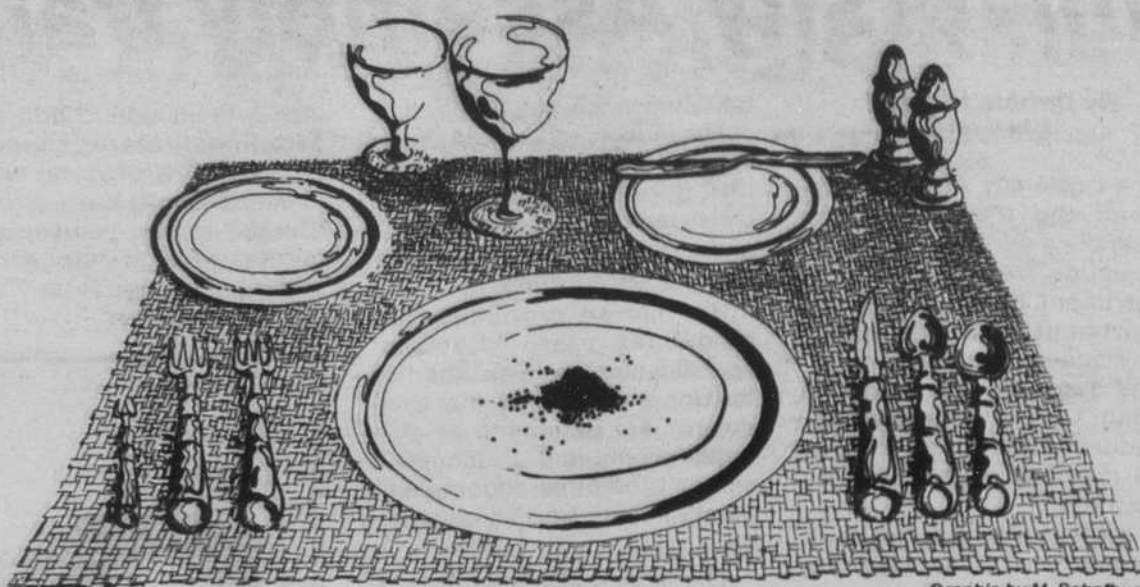
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Doubts about new diet

Professor claims Cambridge plan 'does not work'

By Kevin Houser
Of the Emerald

Billed as the "ultimate diet," the FDA-approved Cambridge plan melts off fat and is a complete and delicious food — at least that's what the brochure says.

But Bob Hackman, a University health education professor, questions the effectiveness of the Cambridge diet plan, a powdered substance that was developed through more than eight years of research at Cambridge University.

The brochure claims the diet powder becomes a "nutritionally balanced meal" when mixed with eight ounces of water. Three Cambridge meals provide 100 percent of the U.S. adult recommended daily allowances (RDA) of vitamins and minerals, and 75 percent of the RDA protein levels — for only 330 calories and with a choice of chocolate, vanilla or strawberry flavors.

"The Cambridge diet, considered by itself, does not work," says Hackman, who has a degree in nutritional biochemistry.

The diet does not address the most fundamental principle of losing weight and keeping it off — reprogramming attitudes about food, Hackman explains. People use food for emotional reasons, he says, adding that 80 percent of people who lose weight on crash diets don't keep it off.

In response to the FDA's approval, Hackman says "So what? It just means that it isn't overtly harmful."

He agrees that the program may be safe for some people, but he cautions potential dieters to listen to the Cambridge salespeople's advice and consult a qualified health professional before starting the plan. Any diet can be unsafe for people with existing medical histories of heart trouble, high blood pressure, or blood sugar difficulties, he says.

Hackman says he is also concerned about the nutritional aspects of the diet. For instance, the diet does not provide enough bulk, which

may lead to atrophy of internal digestion systems, he says.

Some people on the diet may not get enough carbohydrates to amply supply sucrose, which is what the brain and nervous systems use for fuel, according to Hackman. He says this deficiency may lead to a breakdown of muscle tissue as the body attempts to supplement its glucose supply through reserves.

Even with 100 percent of RDA-recommended nutrients, that doesn't necessarily mean the diet is complete, says Hackman.

"We don't know all there is about nutrition — we don't know all the vitamins and minerals necessary for health, and we don't know all the ways vitamins and minerals interact," says Hackman. "It is dangerously elitist" to believe that a formula with 100 percent of the RDA of known nutrients is enough for good health.

Hackman says a modified version of the diet would be more nutritionally sound, suggesting four to six servings of raw vegetables a day to supplement it.

But Hackman says he is "more positive" about Cambridge than other diet programs. The marketing plan, which provides direct, personal contact between buyer and seller, may help some people.

Doug Jollymour, a University student, is a salesman of the diet plan. Cambridge is "rich and filling" and is better than other diet plans, because of its nutritional completeness, he says. On the Cambridge plan, "you don't begin to feel 'down' until three or four days after you start the diet, as you would on some others," says Jollymour, who has about 40 customers on campus.

Most of Jollymour's customers are women. Maybe pride or ego stops men, says Jollymour, adding that many athletes will use the Cambridge in addition to eating regular meals, as a sort of vitamin supplement.

He scoffs at questions about the safety of the diet.

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