



Photo by Angel Montes

Using Food as Medicine

Article by Charlie Ross DO, DipABLM

What does it take to convince a physician that treating the root cause of disease can be more effective and more satisfying than just treating symptoms and managing diseases?

I have been pondering this question for almost a decade and a half. Education is the key component. Lectures and discussion go a long way to expand thought processes and encourage behavior change. But even more powerful motivators can be living the change. If we want to help physicians understand the benefits of Lifestyle Medicine, a combination of lectures and Q&A along with a tasty meal of plant foods can go a long way to help physicians incorporate Food as Medicine into their practice. And if the food is really tasty.... it can be even more motivating!

So that is what Eugene Plant-Based Providers, in collaboration with the Lane County Medical Society (LCMS), has begun in our community.

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Dr. Michael Klaper Visits Oregon

Article by Charlie Ross DO, DipABLM

I was on pins and needles for several weeks in April awaiting the arrival of one of my heroes. I first met Dr. Michael Klaper online years ago when I listened to his TED talk titled “*The best strategy for healing people and the planet.*” I was mesmerized watching this video and I have shared it many times over the number of years I've been teaching classes.

Several years ago, I asked Dr. Klaper to speak at the osteopathic medical school in Lebanon, Oregon. He not only spoke with the medical students there, but he also did a lecture at the University of Oregon for the entire community. It was very well received, and I had the good fortune of being able to go on a hike in the woods with him where I was living in Westfir. Since that visit, I have watched his videos, podcasts, and reviewed his website: *Moving Medicine Forward*.

I met him at a Plantrician conference a couple years ago and suggested he might come to Eugene again and give a talk. He graciously accepted! He had written a new book on moving medicine forward and it was to be released in April 2026. Eugene had a scheduled Vegan Fest the first weekend in May. So, it seemed like a perfect fit to have him be a speaker at the Vegan Fest, and he agreed. Unfortunately, the venue at the Vegan Fest allowed for only 50 to 60 people and I felt he deserved a larger crowd. So, we reserved the Springfield High School auditorium to accommodate a much larger crowd.

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Photo by Auriana Koutnik

SECOND ANNUAL VEGAN FEST

Plant-based providers Debby Coulthard, Scott Wagnon, and Matt Kingsbauer provided information about the Live Lifestyle Medicine program during the second annual Eugene Vegan Fest held on May 3, 2026.

USING FOOD AS MEDICINE

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It took close to a year of negotiating for this to begin. But after discussions with members of LCMS about what to discuss and what foods to provide, arrangements were finalized to provide a Food as Medicine session with a free, plant-based dinner at the YMCA community room on April 9. LCMS advertised and provided the funds for the meal.

Who benefited? The YMCA benefited by having their kitchen utilized and bringing people to its facility. Eugene Plant-Based Providers benefited by promoting its mission. LCMS benefited by encouraging its members on a nutritional wellness journey. And our community benefited because ultimately this will improve the health of our community.

Approximately 30 people attended: physicians and significant others. A full spectrum of various specialties were represented, from psychiatry, family practice, gastroenterology, oral surgery, internal medicine, and others. Discussion was held about how our food choices have changed over the last 100 years, the longest lived and healthiest populations on our planet, fiber as the deficiency in our diet, and many questions answered about oils and supplements and protein. After 30 minutes, a fancy salad was served, after 60 minutes, a bean-and-rice tasty main meal was served. And at 90 minutes, a mouthwatering dessert was served. The delicious foods were prepared and served by Tamera Wilhite, a Food for Life instructor (with assistance from plant-based providers Trish Kingsbauer and Debby Coulthard).

I received very positive reviews from those who attended. Hopefully we can hold more of these sessions over the next several years. As more and more physicians attend, treating the causes of our chronic illnesses will continue to expand and our community health should improve!



Photo by Angel Montes

DR. KLAPER VISITS OREGON

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He agreed to stay with my wife Christine and I at our home. I suspect that was because I told him Christine was a great cook and only served plant foods that were usually only minimally processed.

He arrived around noon at the airport on May 1 and I picked him up. We returned home, got him settled in, and then had a snack together—a salad and fruit. We chatted throughout the rest of the afternoon and then strolled around the neighborhood a bit. He was really tired as he had only gotten about three hours of sleep. After dinner (apple beans...wow...a real treat) he went to sleep for the night.

Saturday, we awoke early and he exercised on our treadmill while I used the elliptical fitness trainer. After morning exercise, we had breakfast brunch. It takes quite a bit of preparation for our breakfast—yes, we eat close to 35 to 40 different types of plant foods. We don't consider this work, it's more fun and a hobby. And I believe he was pretty amazed at how tasty and colorful our breakfast was. We chatted for a long time. My colleague Scott Wagnon came over for a brief visit as they had interacted other times in the past. And then we got on the road to Roseburg. Roseburg had arranged to have a potluck. The potluck had only been announced about a week and a half before, but about 70 to 80 people attended. It was a wonderful event. Dr. Klaper spoke for about an hour and 15 minutes and then he signed close to 30 books. There was so much love at that event. Most everybody had been exposed to him through his TED talks which are shown in their series of classes in the community.

Sunday, we woke up early and again had a wonderful breakfast. We didn't have time to exercise as we needed to be at the fairgrounds by 10:00 am. We arrived at the fairgrounds and Dr. Klaper got set up with books to sell and one helper for each three hour period of time that would be required throughout the day. I was committed to videotaping the lecture sessions. Dr. Klaper had a lecture scheduled from 2 until 2:40. I told him just before his lecture he had a few more minutes because we didn't have a lecture after him-- he could go to maybe 3. I knew we had to leave the building by 4. He had a wonderful lecture presentation and at 3:10 I felt I just needed to stop him from continuing on another 20 minutes because the year before a lot of books had been sold by Robert Cheeke after his lecture session. So I ended the session and told people if they wanted to hear the balance of the talk they could come tomorrow night at Springfield High School auditorium and they wouldn't be disappointed. He was disappointed that I didn't allow him to finish and I was a bit nervous that he might have been fairly upset with me. But he did sell a significant number of books after his lecture and we barely were able to leave the building by 4 pm. We came home and rested briefly and then traveled to Acorn Café where we had a wonderful visit together with a group of supporters.

Monday we awoke a little later as we were not in a rush. Dr. Klaper and I exercised again on the treadmill and elliptical fitness trainer. Then it was breakfast over the next couple hours. Then we went to Hendrick's Park to enjoy the rhododendrons. They were in full bloom. I also loved the peace and the color and the experience of spending time with one of my heroes. We had dinner early, Christine's frittata and she also prepared the chocolate mousse dessert

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DR. KLAPER VISITS OREGON

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(cooking instructor Tamera Wilhite's recipe) which was a hit! Then we were off to the Springfield High School auditorium. He gave an hour and a half lecture which was mesmerizing. I've received so many good comments and great feedback. The crowd looked pretty large - I counted about 200 people. Hopefully, our community will continue to grow and support Food as Medicine and Live Lifestyle Medicine.

At these three events, Dr. Klaper sold about 110 books and was quite happy that he was so well received. We got home around 9:30 pm and went to bed as we needed to get up early.

On Tuesday, we arose around 5 a.m. so I could take him to the airport for an early flight. We were both a bit sleepy, but all in all we had had a wonderful several days together. I dropped him off at the curbside with his bags and I will never forget the long hug that ensued. It was a tremendously moving experience for me to have experienced spending time with this wonderful human being!

“It was a tremendously moving experience for me to have experienced spending time with this wonderful human being!”

- Charlie Ross DO, DipABLM



Dr. Klaper and members of Eugene Plant-Based Providers dine at Acorn Café.

Photo courtesy of Scott Wagnon

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