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PlantPureCommunities.org

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GROUPS CALL ON GOV. CUOMO TO FIGHT COVID-19 HOSPITALIZATIONS VIA NUTRITION

Today, [a letter was released](#) by the nonprofit PlantPure Communities in which a dozen groups from across NY State called on Governor Cuomo to implement a nutrition strategy to keep the curve of hospitalizations bent, so that New York's economy can stay open even if the rate of infection grows. The groups are from Upstate and Downstate communities, and represent nearly 15,000 New Yorkers.

Pointing to commentaries ([Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)) by biochemist/nutrition researcher and Cornell Professor Dr. T. Colin Campbell, the groups made three requests of Governor Cuomo:

- During press briefings, speak about the **diet-related comorbidities** (degenerative diseases like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, hypertension) that increase COVID-19 hospitalization and fatality risk for New Yorkers generally, and which disproportionately impact communities of color and other underserved neighborhoods.
- Speak about the power of a whole food, plant-based diet (vegetables, fruits, whole grain cereals, legumes and nuts) to defend against the worst effects of COVID-19.
- Publicly pledge to eat these foods for 10 days (there is a Global 10-day Jumpstart kicking off soon), thereby encouraging others to take these crucial first steps toward healing and doing their part to 'Keep the Curve Bent' so our economy can stay open!

Mortality data shows that over 90% of the people who have died from COVID-19 suffered from pre-existing medical conditions, mostly arising from a lifetime of bad nutrition. **Jody Kass**, Executive Director of PlantPure Communities, the nonprofit that organized the sign-on letter, said *"As a life-long New Yorker, I thank Gov. Cuomo for his steady hand during the pandemic. The same way he modelled for New Yorkers the importance of wearing a mask, we now need Gov. Cuomo to model for New Yorkers and the rest of the country the importance of eating a whole food, plant-based diet to decrease the hospitalization and fatality risk from COVID."*

According to Dr. Campbell's commentaries, there is evidence that suggests that switching to a healthy plant-based diet would not only decrease chronic disease risk, and sometimes reverse these conditions, but also increase the production of COVID-19 antibodies. And, there is ample information showing that this nutritional effect may begin in a matter of days, enough time for people who are not yet infected to strengthen their immune systems. **Nelson Campbell**, PPC Founder and son of Dr. Campbell, said *"For too long, powerful economic interests have gotten in the way of communicating to the public the health and environmental benefits of a plant-based diet. Now we are suffering through a pandemic, made worse by nutritionally-caused chronic conditions. It's time we let people know that a diet of whole, plant-based foods can help defend against the worst effects of COVID-19."*

By addressing diet-related comorbidities while also strengthening immunity, a nutrition strategy would reduce strain on our hospital system and thereby improve our ability to keep the economy open now that it has restarted. **Dr. T. Colin Campbell**, biochemist/nutrition researcher and Cornell professor who serves as an advisor to PlantPure Communities, said: *"It is well past time for the discipline of nutrition, properly defined, to be made available to the public through appropriate policy instruments and to training program curricula for primary caretakers (physicians, nurses) within the medical profession. It also is well past time that primary health care providers be properly reimbursed for counseling in the use of nutrition as a means of prevention and treatment of illnesses and diseases."*

Peg Haust-Arliss, leader of the Seneca Falls Pod said, *"New York: Tough, Smart, United, Disciplined, Loving. Especially loving. This is why my family coined Gov. Cuomo "Papa NY." So, thank you, Governor Cuomo, on behalf of your Finger Lakes kids for your consistent leadership during these unprecedented times. Please accept our invitation to eat plant-based for 10 days so you can speak first hand of the power and ease of nutrition for further reducing COVID risk and maintaining the progress NY has made."*

Bonnie Hepler, RN and PPMNY Brooklyn Pod leader said *"Working as a NYC nurse at the height of COVID was a sobering experience. Nearly all COVID-19 deaths I saw were patients with lifestyle-related comorbidities (obesity, hypertension, heart disease, etc.). Most ICU patients I cared for had an underlying condition that is documented to respond swiftly to a low-fat, plant-based diet. It confirmed for me, time and again, that nutrition is the only way we can stop this from happening again. In response, I'm doing everything I can to broadcast the power of food."*

Pod Leader Kathy Fortner of the 300-member Central NY Whole Food Plant Based Health and Wellness Community Pod, in Manlius, Onondaga County, said, *"Those of greatest risk of complications from COVID-19 have high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes - all of which can not only be prevented but reversed through a WFPB lifestyle. Results ARE typical AND achievable with education and support. It's scientifically supported through peer-reviewed, unbiased research: a WFPB diet is better for our health, our planet and, therefore, our society."*

Mitchell Castell, leader of the 500-member Long Island Plant Powered Metro NY Pod, said *"It's time for the world to understand the proven overall benefits of eating whole food plant based; it is definitely not promoted enough"*.

Natasha Spearman-Isip of the Staten Island Sprouts Pod said, *"Our Pod has a focus on the African American/ minority population as the health impacts from unhealthy food are particularly acute and pervasive in our Staten Island neighborhood. Since 2017, we have been working with the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness to share the science about the benefits of whole foods plant based eating. We have presented to a local school that services minority students, and we are working to empower our neighbors by heightening awareness of the power of food choices to shape our health destiny."*

Nevin Sabet-Swingle, leader of the Whole Food Plant Based Tompkins County Pod, said *"Ithaca has a reputation for being a forward thinking and intellectually advanced community, yet there are few if any whole food, plant based, non-fried items available on our local restaurant menus. Our Pod is striving to help educate local chefs that low fat, plant based meals can not only prevent but also reverse chronic diseases of aging such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and rheumatoid arthritis."*

Enrica Sacca, leader of the 500-member Plant Powered Metro NY Queens Pod, said *“Governor Cuomo, from one Italian-American to another, my story can be yours: When my family changed from a Mediterranean-style diet to the meat and potatoes of standard American fare, we all became ill. By choosing a whole food, plant-based diet, I am free of my chronic illness and now appreciate plant-based Italian food traditions from a place of health.”*

Mare Gomez-Bolanos, PPMNY Latinx Community organizer in Queens, shared this insight: *“In our experience, Black and Hispanic/Latino communities – who are most susceptible to the worst effects of COVID – have been most receptive to the idea that significant dietary change can transform their chronic conditions. Contrary to prevailing beliefs that people prefer shortcuts to health and won't go to lengths to change what they eat, they understand that our food systems are not designed to promote our health, so they are thrilled to learn that food is the best medicine.”*

Dhruv Gupta from the Green Thumbs Hudson Valley Pod, reported, *“We organize hands-on cooking classes to help the Ossining community learn how tasty and easy it is to cook whole plant-based meals. My mother-in-law has reversed her type 2 diabetes after switching to a whole food plant-based diet. I know this works!”*

Rogier F. van Vlissingen, from the 210-member Bronx Pod, commented that *“The statistics reveal that we're having more of a comorbidity crisis than a virus crisis, as 95% of COVID-19 deaths involve comorbidities. The comorbidities are chronic diseases that can all be prevented or reversed with a whole foods, plant-based diet.”*

Plant Based Westchester Pod leader Jeanne Schumacher shared, *“We can NOT sustain what we are doing to ourselves and this planet. It's the food. Change your food. Change your health destiny.”* (Over 2,200 Pod members)

Livi Laska and Deborah Chielli, leaders of the Plant Powered Chautauqua County Pod in Frewsburg, shared: *“It's never too late to start questioning the lifestyle choices that we've been raised with. We need to take the power into our own hands and make change. Undo disease and help fight off cancer with what we are putting in our mouths. When we know better, we do better.”*

Lianna Levine Reisner, coordinator of the Manhattan chapter of the Plant Powered Metro New York Pod with 3,500 members, commented: *“As grassroots leaders for a new health movement, we are holding out a lifeline to our fellow New Yorkers. Chronic illness isn't just about our genes. Food matters. Plant foods can heal us and help us fight infection. Everyone needs to know this truth to move beyond the fear of this moment.”* Pod Co-coordinator **Lynn Diamond** said *“We need to empower people to take charge of their own health; it is sad that so many COVID cases were complicated by lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.”*

The PlantPure Communities Pod Network is the backbone of a grassroots movement of people participating in independent local groups, called “Pods” who promote the benefits of a whole food, plant-based diet. To date, more than 250,000 people participate in the PlantPure Communities Pod Network in 29 countries.

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