



Is There Any Meal Worth Dying For?

By Margaret Gaglione, M.D., FACP

The long white coat and stethoscope are proud symbols of our profession. For many of us, they are symbols that evoke a sense of pride and responsibility. A highlight event at most medical schools is the tradition of the white coat ceremony at the end of second year, welcoming the new third-year medical students to the world of clinical medicine.

There is a restaurant in Chandler, AZ, called Heart Attack Grill. If you have not had the opportunity to see the recent report that *CBS News* reporter, Bill Geist did on November 25, 2008, I invite you to take a look at it. It can be found at www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=4632991n. The owner of this restaurant, John Basso, started the restaurant three years ago with the intent of “selling nutritional pornography.” “Dr. John” wears a white coat and stethoscope and claims that in his restaurant there are no concessions to health because “we don’t even serve lettuce . . . “because everyone is “sick and tired of reading everything else out there telling them ‘Hey, this is bad for you, don’t do it’ . . . and for one golden moment, I am going to get what I want and that is a big, sugary, rich Coca-Cola and a quadruple bypass burger dripping with fat.”

The only food served in this restaurant is hamburgers and French fries, along with nondiet drinks and unfiltered cigarettes. The burgers are named “Single Bypass,” “Double Bypass,” “Triple Bypass” or “Quadruple Bypass” and the all-you-can-eat French fries are called “Flat Liner Fries.” The Quadruple Bypass burger is 8,000 calories. Customers are called patients, and are given wristbands to identify them and their order or “prescription” when they enter the restaurant. Customers who have had the Triple or Quadruple Bypass burgers are wheeled out in wheelchairs by their waitress or “nurses” when they have finished their “meal worth dying for.”

Look at the video again. Do you see any normal-weight individuals? There is a major incentive for the morbidly obese person to frequent Heart Attack Grill. If you weigh over 350 lbs., you eat for free. The website touts “anyone over 350 lbs. eats for free, all day, any day, unlimited.” This restaurant would be akin to a bar that gives out free Long Island Iced Teas to known alcoholics.

The immediate medical risks to a person, post an 8,000 calorie, fat-laden meal are not insignificant. They range from reflux, to acute cholecystitis, to an acute myocardial infarction. Many studies have shown that there is endothelial dysfunction, evidence of impaired vasodilatation, and hypercoagulability after

consumption of even 50 grams of fat at one meal (which would only account for 450 of the 8,000 calories in the Quadruple Bypass burger).

In the last 22 months, our practice has helped over 300 real patients lose over 8,000 pounds without surgery by becoming cognizant of the bizarre transformation that has occurred in our country with mass production of restaurants and food. We have shown this video in our clinic weight-loss classes, the discussion has been lively and thought provoking. Maybe some good will come out of such an abomination. Our patients have already found that there is no “meal worth dying for.”

Dr. Margaret MacKrell Gaglione is the Medical Director of Tidewater Bariatrics in Chesapeake, a practice dedicated to the care of overweight and obese patients. She is a board-certified internal medicine physician and bariatric specialist. She can be reached at (757) 644-6819 or www.tidewaterbariatrics.com. ■

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757.321.9991 | hbarlow@mdnews.com