

His bestselling book *Eat Right 4 Your Type* has sold more than 6 million copies. Now that he's gotten everyone's attention, Dr. Peter J. D'Adamo is charting a new future for the field of naturopathy with colleagues from the College of Naturopathic Medicine.

In the Genes

By Leslie Geary

D'Adamo's patients live around the world, but it all began with his father's practice in Brooklyn, NY.

"Here, take one."

Dr. Peter J. D'Adamo is standing before nine College of Naturopathic Medicine graduate students, who for the past 30 minutes have been feverishly tapping notes on laptop computers. They're intent on transcribing his lecture into the safekeeping of hard drives. And no wonder: D'Adamo is arguably the most famous naturopathic physician in the world, thanks to his book *Eat Right 4 Your Type*.

Since its publication in 1996, more than 6 million copies have been sold, introducing concepts like agglutination and panhemagglutinins to the masses—and to more than a few bold-faced names. Among them: fashion designer Tommy Hilfinger, who cites D'Adamo as "the most amazing healer I know," and television's Dr. Mehmet Oz, who calls D'Adamo's work "one level past where most of us stop."

But D'Adamo has no interest in celebrity. Instead he's determined to train the next generation of naturopathic physicians and to further advance the field



by focusing on patients' distinctive genetic makeup.

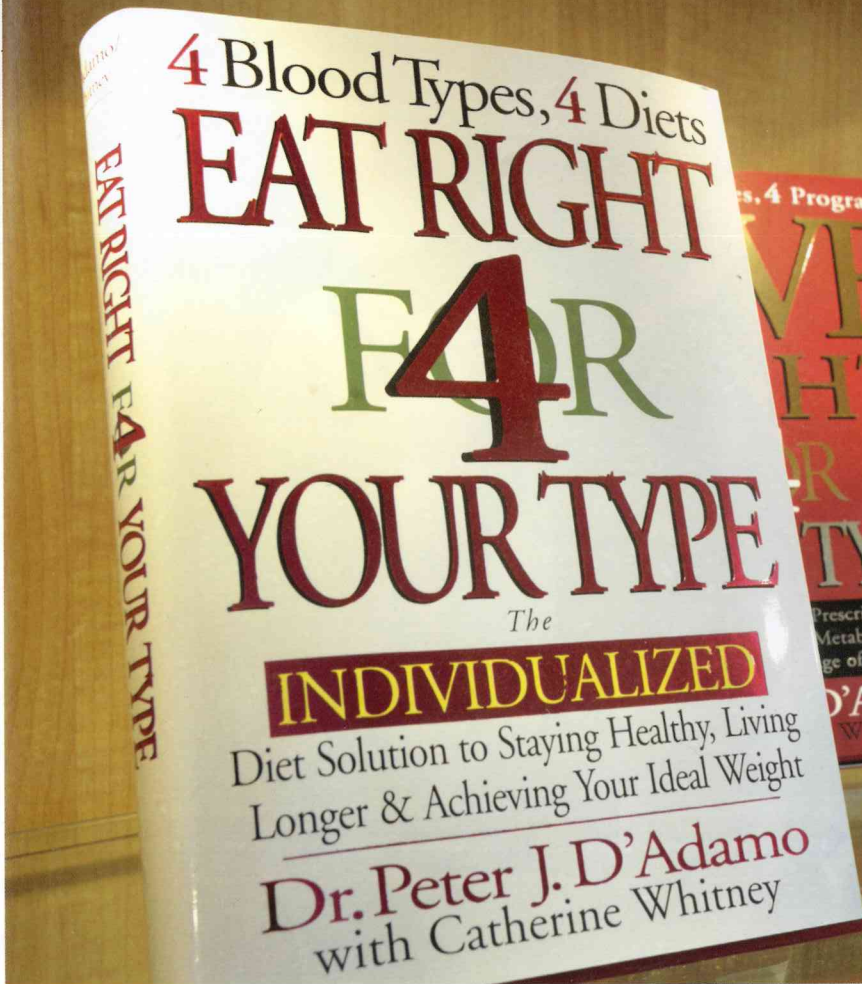
To do that, he's been teaching specialized clinics at the College of Naturopathic Medicine since the fall of 2009. And he's been working on a joint venture between his company, North American Pharmacal, and the College to develop a Center for Excellence in Generative Medicine

to be located on the UB campus.

As envisioned, the independent Center not only would broaden UB's naturopathic curriculum it also would be based on D'Adamo's most recent research into genotypes. "It will," D'Adamo says grandly, "revolutionize clinical medicine."

In fact, later in the day, D'Adamo is scheduled to meet with naturopathic college dean Dr. GSS Khalsa and George Estrada, vice president for planning and construction, to tour an elegant white building on campus that may one day house the Center.

But first D'Adamo must finish distributing to his students playing cards from a small black box.



The 1996 book that fueled D'Adamo's success and brought naturopathy to the masses

“Television’s Dr. Mehmet Oz calls D’Adamo’s work ‘one level past where most of us stop.’”

They’re from a deck created by musician Brian Eno and artist Peter Schmidt called “Oblique Strategies: 100 Worthwhile Dilemmas.” Each card is imprinted with a principle, such as: Look closely at the most embarrassing details and amplify or Honor error as hidden intention.

A student reads her card: Use fewer notes. Smiling, she puts it down and closes her laptop. It’s an irreverent way to underscore D’Adamo’s earlier assurance to students that the sum of his teachings (and their fervent typing) eventually will “become muscle memory.”

The deck also seems hallmark D’Adamo, champion of Doing It Differently. For the remainder of the clinic he serves as wise professor and an academic Pan, skipping gleefully from the topic of genotypes to Martin Luther and the creation of modern German. (Luther, D’Adamo informs the class, constructed the language using

experienced-based reasoning, known as heuristics, that can be invaluable in naturopathy.) Then he’s off to the larger, philosophical question: Should naturopathy codify its techniques? (Pros: “It’s a way to mine data backwards.” Cons: “You don’t always want A plus B to equal C because that’s not what happens in the real world.”)

One size for one

D’Adamo’s real world, in fact, is riddled with exceptions. People, he insists, are unique—not in the way a child is special to a parent—but in their genetic make-up. And it’s why he eschews a one-size-fits-all approach to health.

Easy enough to say—but radically unconventional. Talk shows, magazines, self-help books, and the Internet are filled with cookie-cutter tips to improve health,



Student Maura Henninger is training to join what D'Adamo envisions as naturopathy's future.



“He concluded that

stress according to our blood types. Thus he advises blood Type Os to add more lean meats, poultry, and fish to their diets because they better metabolize proteins and ketones, which keep glucose levels consistent. On the other hand, he cautions, Type As store meat as fat, so they should adopt more plant-based vegetarian diets.

Call it a hunch

That advice, funnily enough, began as no more than a hunch developed by D'Adamo's father. Dr. James D'Adamo was a freshly minted naturopathic physician working in Europe in 1957 when he noticed that some of his clients thrived on vegetarian, low-fat diets, while others actually fared worse. Intrigued, he eventually concluded that “one man's food is another man's poison.”

While his rationale was based solely on observation and instinct, the elder D'Adamo relocated his family to New York, where many of the city's artistic and cultural elite became his patients. When he closed his Brooklyn clinic for the day, the family, all of whom have Type A blood, gathered around the dinner table, enjoying

fitness, beauty, and sexual prowess. Yet this blizzard of encouragement is rife with contradiction. Power foods like salmon, T-bone steaks, kale, and lentils battle it out for space on dinner plates. Vitamin D supplants Vitamins E and C as the supplement du jour. Long-distance runners trade in Nikes for yoga mats.

“We hear so much, ‘My diet is better than your diet. I say protein, you say vegan. I say low carb and you say low fat,’” D'Adamo says. “All of these [trends] have half of the auditorium thinking you're right and the other half thinking you're wrong.”

D'Adamo's premise—the basis for *Eat Right 4 Your Type*—neither embraces nor rejects any single plan because each may or may not be effective, depending on what's pumping through your veins. More specifically, D'Adamo believes we should eat, exercise, and deal with



D'Adamo and naturopathic college dean Dr. GSS Khalsa tour the potential location for the new Center for Excellence in Generative Medicine.

Left: D'Adamo has taught at UB since 2009.

“one man’s food is another man’s poison.”

Christl D'Adamo's home-cooked Mediterranean and Asian-style meals that eschewed heavy proteins and excessive dairy.

Maybe it was his mother's cooking, or a simple case of “being in the genes,” but Peter D'Adamo always knew he'd follow in his dad's footsteps. And when he enrolled at John Bastyr College in Seattle to earn his doctorate in naturopathy, he began digging through research to see if the old man's theories about blood type and diet would hold up to the science. His first breakthrough came when he made a link between peptic ulcers and Type Os, the very same group that thrive on high-protein diets. He concluded that Type Os' higher levels of stomach acid, which aid in the digestion of meat and poultry, could cause ulcers if they become too elevated.

Naturopathy 2.0

Encouraged, D'Adamo kept digging, finding similar correlations; his 30-plus-year career in human blood types was launched.

“The change in the profession has been tremendous,”

he says. “To doctors of my father's generation, the wisdom and knowledge was mostly first-person observational. I refer to this as Naturopathic Medicine 1.0. Of course, you have to remember back then, how few people were working with diets of naturopathic nature? Patients were told to eat a balanced diet and that was it. Today, it's currently focused on fitting naturopathic principles to hard science: Naturopathic Medicine 2.0, if you will.”

While millions of readers have taken his message to heart, D'Adamo concedes he still has critics who “don't understand the science.” He's not shy about blaming medical schools, which “don't teach many people in the medical sciences about the importance of blood type other than in transfusions.

“One of the things about teaching at UB is the exposure to the next generation naturopathic doctors and the opportunity to help them understand that even something so simple as blood type has such a complex underpinning,” he explains. “To a scientist that's very assuring. When you look under the hood, it's not seeing a gopher on a rubber band. There's a lot of good basic

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science behind the effects of blood groups on highly individualized nutritional requirements.”

Playing with genes

D’Adamo isn’t simply reaching “a broader audience” of naturopathic physicians at UB, he’s intent on bringing them along for the next phase of his work in the field of epigenetics, the study of how genes interact with the environment.

Heuristically speaking, it’s a logical next step. Blood types are determined by one gene out of roughly 30,000. Epigenetic genotypes, on the other hand, are the complex sum of thousands upon thousands of genes acting in relation to environmental influences. So while we can’t change the genes we’re born with, D’Adamo believes that through diet, supplements, and exercise, the expression of genes can be manipulated much in the same way one adjusts volume on the radio.

COLLEGE OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

At a Glance

The College of Naturopathic Medicine’s clinic features a lab, X-ray facilities, hydrotherapy, and physiotherapy rooms. For an appointment, call (203) 576-4349.

The College runs a dispensary on campus at 60 Lafayette Street that sells vitamins, supplements, herbal medicines, and homeopathics.

The College clinic hosts Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes, a support program for individuals trying to lose weight and make healthy lifestyle changes.

UB naturopathic students do rounds at St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport and at other institutions to care for the elderly, patients with HIV/AIDS, and individuals in addiction-recovery programs.

Books by naturopathic college faculty include Dr. Jody Noe’s *Textbook of Naturopathic Oncology*, which is used at naturopathic medical colleges throughout North America, and *Fundamentals of Naturopathic Pediatrics* by Dr. Jared Skowron, an expert in children’s health and autism.

— L.G.

Of course, DNA testing is expensive, so D’Adamo considers personal data—such as the length of someone’s limb or torso, and various ratios between these so-called anthropometric measurements—to identify six broadly drawn genotypes, which he’s redubbed GenoTypes. Those, in turn, enable naturopathic doctors to size up patients and personalize their healing.

In fact, personalized healing is the crux of the Center of Excellence in Generative Medicine, says Associate Dean Dr. Elizabeth Pimentel. “It’s a really nice method to dovetail with naturopathic medicine to refine individual treatments because we can tease out a person’s genotype and phenotype, which is how their genes are expressed,” says Pimentel.

She recalls D’Adamo’s first visit to UB two years ago, when he accompanied students on grand rounds: “He had a really great response to the students. He proposed the idea of teaching a class, and then clinic shifts. But we began seeing a bigger picture of incorporating his ideas into the curriculum so students could immerse themselves into this work.”

In addition to expanding its curriculum, the Center also will provide high-quality patient care, conduct research, and do post-graduate training with a new certificate program in individualized care.

Details, such as the Center’s ultimate location and opening dates, have yet to be finalized. But College of Naturopathic Medicine students like Maura Henninger already credit D’Adamo for shaping their future. Henninger, 32, was working as an editor for *Condé Nast Traveler* in 2007 when she quit her job to launch a career in naturopathic medicine. “Dr. D’Adamo wasn’t affiliated with UB at all when I started. He wasn’t a factor in my decision to come to the University.”

Nonetheless Henninger was well aware of D’Adamo’s reputation; she had read *Eat Right 4 Your Type* in high school, after reading its review in the *New York Times*. Interested in health, and not a little bit precocious, she plowed through the 384-page book and immediately “coerced my family to create diet plans” based on their blood types. “I followed it pretty closely,” she says. “I felt great.”

Henninger continues: “His mind is just unbelievable, and he’s one of the kindest people I’ve met. To say he has had an impact on the way I think about naturopathic medicine and my plans for the future would be a massive understatement.”



D'Adamo's Wilton, Connecticut practice, boasts a dispensary filled with his nutritional supplements. Each day a UPS picks up orders destined around the world.

Henninger also works with patients at D'Adamo's private clinic, a fashionably refurbished gray-shingled barn in Wilton, Connecticut. The property boasts a distribution center and shop in the back, where shelves are lined with nutritional supplements developed by D'Adamo. Patients can buy them in person or order them online, and each day a UPS truck picks up deliveries destined for cities across the United States, Europe, South America, Africa, and New Zealand.

Henninger doesn't say if she'll develop her own line of supplements, too. But she does want to use genotype-based diets when she opens her own clinic in New York—not far, perhaps, from the Brooklyn practice where the elder Dr. James D'Adamo's hunch started it all more than five decades ago. ■

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