Leyla Weighs In: Good vs. poor scientific research (part one)

I'm sure you already know that just because some new health information is published or reported does not ensure it is sound or correct.

I understand your frustration (not to mention my own) when every other week, there's another confounding research article published in one of the highly-esteemed, peer-reviewed journals about the health benefits, or detriments, of coffee, for example. The evening news fuels the fire with its non-context reporting, casting doubt on previously reported information causing more public confusion, and calling into question the integrity and reliability of scientific research altogether.

There are inordinate amounts of sound, scientific research sharing the spotlight with mediocre research in print, television, and the internet, many with differing agendas. As healthcare practitioners, we are left holding the bag to sort through it all, pluck the pearls, and provide a context to the information thrust out to the public like cannonballs.

How do we do this?

If we’re worthy of our credentials, we scrutinize the research, look for reliability, non-bias, integrity in the methodology, and thoroughly examine any confounders and extraneous variables that may invalidate the research in question. This is how we differentiate valid and reliable research conclusions from questionable outcomes and conclusions borne out of unsound methods or measurements.

We do this all the time—pluck out the pearls, if there are any to be had.

And you won’t hear about it on the evening news.

Next week, I’ll illustrate an example of how we differentiate sound scientific research from invalid, unreliable research.

To your health!