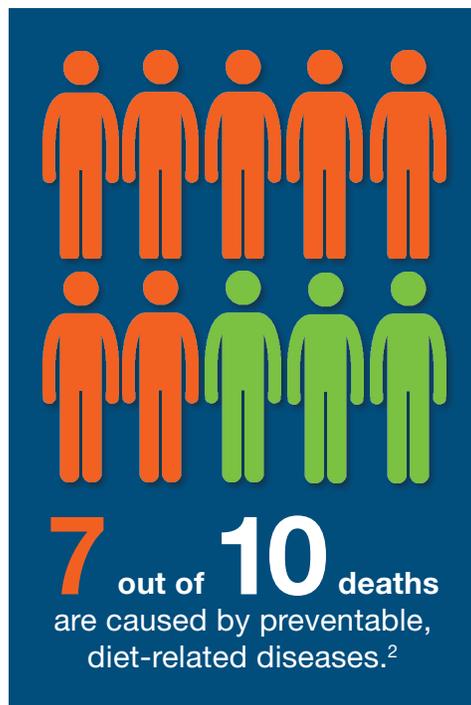


# Expanding Nutrition's Role in Curricula and Healthcare (ENRICH) Act (HR 1411)

Nutrition and other lifestyle factors such as physical activity play a major role in maintaining a healthy weight and in disease prevention and treatment, particularly for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and even cancer and Alzheimer's disease. However, nutrition and physical activity education in health professional training remains inadequate. Nutrition and physical activity training will prepare our health care professionals to better prevent, treat, and even reverse these expensive and often fatal chronic diseases.

The **ENRICH Act** would establish a \$15 million competitive grant program administered through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in coordination with the NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) for medical schools to integrate nutrition education and physical activity into their curricula.

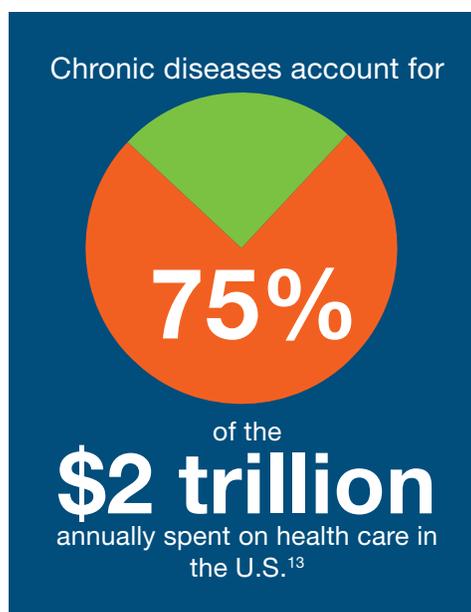


## Background

There is no dedicated funding to increase nutrition education or physical activity for health care professionals in medical schools and residency programs. The Nutrition Academic Award (NAA), funded primarily by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), provided over \$15 million to 21 of the 126 existing medical institutions (\$150,000 per school) to integrate nutrition education into medical school curricula from 1998 to 2005.

The ENRICH Act would fund at minimum 30 medical schools and will further build on initiatives like the NAA that sustained and increased nutrition education and awareness among training physicians:

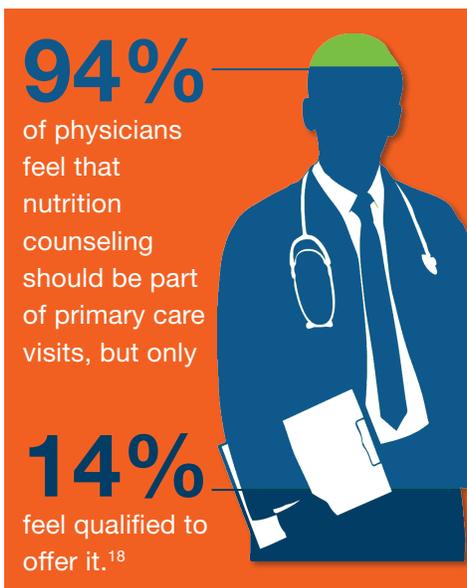
- Medical students in NAA schools viewed their nutrition education as more adequate than in non-NAA schools (about half of NAA students v. about one-third of non-NAA students) and this increased over the length of the program.<sup>1</sup>
- More than 50 percent of NAA schools show consistent inclusion of nutrition in their curriculum.
- More than 25 non-NAA schools increased nutrition in their curriculum due to NAA efforts.
- More than 10,000 medical students were affected by the collective NAA efforts.



## The Problem

- Two-thirds of the American population is currently overweight, half of whom are obese.<sup>3</sup> One in three children is now overweight, and one in five is obese.<sup>4</sup>
- A poor diet is linked to obesity and chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.<sup>5</sup>
- A 1985 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report recommended that all medical schools require at least 25 contact hours of nutrition education. In 2004, only 38 percent of medical schools met these minimum standards by requiring 25 hours of nutrition education as part of their general curricula. By 2010, that number had shrunk to 27 percent.<sup>6</sup>
- Over half of medical students feel their nutrition education is inadequate.<sup>7</sup>
- Current data indicate that few residents, fellows, and other clinicians are comfortable with managing their patients' nutrition problems.<sup>8,9</sup>
- Physician counseling on physical activity can increase physical activity<sup>10,11</sup>—in one study, physical activity among patients increased after receiving physician advice.<sup>12</sup>

- While the majority of medical school deans regard physical activity as important, only 13% of medical schools integrate physical activity into the core curricula.<sup>14,15</sup>
- Only 13.8 percent of physician office visits included counseling about nutrition or diet and only 12.3 percent included physical activity for patients diagnosed with a chronic health condition.<sup>16</sup>
- Recognizing the importance of nutrition and physical activity, Healthy People 2020—the federal government’s framework for a healthier nation—includes goals to increase the proportion of physician office visits that include counseling or education related to nutrition (NWS-6) and physical activity (PA-11).<sup>17</sup>



## The Solution

At least 10 grants totaling \$5 million per year for three years will go to medical schools, and would fund at minimum 30 medical schools.

- Grants will target medical schools that combine nutrition and physical activity education with residency programs, help medical schools meet the NAS standard of providing at least 25 hours of nutrition education, and support medical schools that integrate a comprehensive nutrition curriculum that includes physical activity with other health care professional education programs.
- HRSA will submit annual reports and a final report to Congress evaluating the ENRICH grant program and establish best practices for improving nutrition education among physicians.
- The ENRICH Act will help achieve the goals the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans to boost physical activity. More than 80 percent of Americans do not meet federal recommendations for aerobic physical activity.
- The ENRICH Act will help meet the Healthy People 2020 goal of including more nutrition and physical activity in physician office visits and will increase referrals to registered dietitians, nutritionists, and fitness professionals.

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## Support

The ENRICH Act is supported by a broad coalition of organizations, including the Association of American Medical Colleges, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, the American Medical Student Association, the American College of Preventive Medicine, the American Heart Association, the American Society for Nutrition, and the American College of Sports Medicine.



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