



TUMMY TROUBLES

By Judith Riddle

As you know, May is National Celiac Disease Awareness Month, an especially important time for nutrition professionals across the country to raise awareness of celiac disease and counsel clients on how to eat a nutrient-dense, gluten-free diet to maintain health and wellness.

Approximately 1 in 133 people in the United States has celiac disease, yet 97% of individuals with the condition go undiagnosed. That means only 3% of sufferers are aware they have it. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder characterized by a permanent intolerance to gluten, a protein found in rye, barley, and other grains. It causes inflammation of and damage to the small intestine, leading to malabsorption of iron, folate, calcium, and vitamin D, and in advanced stages, the fat-soluble vitamins A, E, and K, as well as carbohydrates and fats. This means many people with celiac disease are suffering from nutrient deficiencies that can lead to a myriad of health problems down the line. So getting the word out about the disease and healthful ways to manage it through diet is paramount.

In 2007, the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) urged the FDA to finalize standards for

gluten-free labeling. Five years later, we're still waiting for the FDA to fulfill this mandate. But after reopening the Gluten-Free Labeling proposal last August and taking on the task of reviewing hundreds of comments from nutrition professionals and celiac disease and gluten-free community leaders, there's a good chance the FDA may finalize standards for gluten-free labeling by the end of the summer.

In acknowledgement of celiac disease awareness month, our cover story, "Gluten Free and Healthy," on page 24 takes a closer look at celiac disease. The article discusses ways nutrition professionals can better recognize the signs and symptoms, common nutrient deficiencies, the gluten-free diet, and the best foods that promote intestinal healing.

Also in this issue is our annual Gluten-Free Buyers' Guide, featuring a wide variety of food products to tell patients about. Our feature article "The Mediterranean Diet" offers practical shopping tips, menu ideas, and recipes for clients interested in this unique heart-healthy eating style. And in "The Power of Social Networking," you'll find out how your peers are successfully using Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to network, promote nutrition messages, and build their careers.

Please enjoy the issue!

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