

SUBJECT: Recognizing the Importance of Labeling Gluten as an Allergen

SUBMITTED BY: Student Association of the ACOFP on behalf of Amber Shirley, OMS-II, Lincoln Memorial University DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine and Nadav Ribak, OMS-II, Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine

REFERRED TO: 2023 American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) Congress of Delegates

RESOLUTION NO. 14

1 WHEREAS, approximately two million Americans are diagnosed with celiac disease (1) and
2 approximately 6% of Americans have a non-celiac gluten sensitivity (2); and
3

4 WHEREAS, gluten is a protein found in grain products that patients with celiac disease and non-celiac
5 gluten sensitivity should avoid in order to treat their disease (3); and
6

7 WHEREAS, celiac disease symptoms consists of diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss, bloating, gas, abdominal
8 pain, nausea, vomiting, constipation, anemia, osteoporosis, osteomalacia, mouth ulcers, and
9 nervous system disorder(4); and
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11 WHEREAS, patients with celiac disease have a higher instance than the general population of eating
12 disorder such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, thus adding stress and pressure to grocery
13 shopping (5); and
14

15 WHEREAS, a 2006 study by the Canadian Celiac Association showed that 83% of participants with
16 celiac disease reported issues in finding gluten free foods at grocery stores and 85% reported
17 issues in identifying whether a food contains gluten (6); and
18

19 WHEREAS, 15.9% of patients with celiac disease in the United States are considered food insecure,
20 jeopardizing treatment and negatively affecting their health and quality of life (7); and
21

22 WHEREAS, gluten can be found in derivatives of wheat, barley, and rye that may show up on food labels
23 as “natural flavors” and “caramel color”, thus making it difficult to decide if a food product is
24 indeed free of gluten because barley and rye are not required to be labeled(8); and
25

26 WHEREAS, gluten itself is not listed in the allergens, only derivatives of wheat; and
27

28 WHEREAS, current US Food Drug Administration guidelines allow food manufacturers to label
29 products as containing gluten or gluten free on a voluntary basis (9); and
30

31 WHEREAS, other countries such as Australia and New Zealand require that all food products label the
32 gluten content (10); and

WHEREAS, clear labeling on food products regarding gluten content would be beneficial to patients looking for food products; and

WHEREAS, this could be achieved by adding gluten to the allergens listed on food products similar to common food allergens such as wheat, milk soy, etc.; and

WHEREAS, the eight allergens that are listed, milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans, have been beneficial in allowing people with food allergies to easily discern what they can consume; gluten is currently not on that list, but adding it to this list would be beneficial for those who have to avoid consuming it; and (11)

WHEREAS, groups like the Gluten Intolerance Group in their mission of making life easier for those who are gluten-free and providing the standardized Gluten Free Certification Organization (GFCO) to identify foods that undergo rigorous testing for gluten containment, and Gluten Free WatchDog, an advocacy group that alerts gluten free consumers to recalls, mislabeling, etc., have been advocating for stricter food labeling claims for gluten (12, 13, 14); now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFPP) recognizes and supports initiatives promoting the labeling of gluten as an allergen on all consumer products, including, but not limited to food labels and pharmaceuticals.

FINAL ACTION: APPROVED as of March 29, 2023

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