

# APFRI Health Day focuses on extending your life

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*Dr. Leslie Bonci, a nationally-recognized sports dietitian, and Dr. Dean Ornish, president and founder of the nonprofit Preventive Medicine Research Institute, spoke to the Army War College student body for the Army Physical Fitness Research Institute Health Day Aug. 5 in Bliss Hall. Photo by Amanda Keene.*

To watch the video of the presentations go [here](#)

Aug. 5, 2010 - Small changes in diet and lifestyle can pay huge dividends in quality and length of life according to two experts in the field of health and nutrition during the 2010 Army Physical Fitness Research Institute Health Day Aug. 5 in Bliss Hall.

“We want to help you start off your Army War College year the right way by helping provide some good information on health and prevention,” said Dr. Tom Williams, APFRI director.

Health Day is the first entry in a year-long series of educational programs for the joint, interagency and international student body. APFRI links education about health and well-being with leader readiness. Presentations included world-class speakers addressing the latest findings in health promotion and risk factor reduction research. Health Day was open to USAWC students, staff and faculty and their families.

The first speaker, Dr. Dean Ornish, spoke about the “power of personalized lifestyle changes.”

“We tend to think about advances in medicine as being a new drug, a new laser or something expensive,” he said. “We often have a hard time believing that the simple choices we make in life each day like how we eat or respond to stress can make such a power impact on our health but they do.

Research has proven what a power difference these choices can make in how well and how long we live.”

Ornish recommended these tips:

- Exercise is essential to improve your ability to fight off health problems. Make activity a regular part of your lifestyle.
- When making changes to diet, stay away from trans fat and saturated fat. Instead, eat more healthy fats such as omega 3 fatty acids and canola oil.
- Supplement your diet with fish oil which contains omega 3 fatty acids. He recommend three grams per day
- A glass of pomegranate juice every day can make a big difference in your health. It is packed with helpful antioxidants.
- Don't diet! Not giving your body the food it needs is harmful to the body, even if you are losing weight. Instead, make healthy choices such as low fat and high fiber foods.
- Mental health affects physical health. People who manage stress well, focus on their relationships and take time to enjoy themselves live longer and happier lives.

Ornish pointed out that the discipline to make necessary changes was evident in the room.

“You are here at the Army War College, the best of the best. You know what discipline is, to not make certain choices. It’s the same with your diet.”

Lt. Col. Jeffrey “Fletch” Fletcher, student, said that the presentation made him realize the duty that senior leaders have in taking care of their health.

“His take on how we need to be emotional in taking control of our own health and passing that along to our Soldiers really hit home for me,” he said. “He easily explained to us how we can make changes and no matter how small they seem can have a huge impact on our lives.”

The second speaker of the day was Dr. Leslie Bonci, a nationally-recognized sports dietitian, and Director of Sports Nutrition in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery and the Center for Sports Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. She has worked with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Cleveland Browns and record-setting sprinter Usain Bolt.

Bonci focused her remarks on “strategic eating, being proactive, selective and informed,” and said that one of the most important factors is having a healthy eating pattern.

“My goal is that when you walk out of this room you’ll do one thing differently,” she said.

Bonci said to follow these easy tips to establish a healthy eating pattern:

- At least three meals a day -- and breakfast is a must
- Calories are based upon energy expenditure and metabolic rate
- Eating and food choices are NOT one size fits all
- Portions are critical
- Need to choose an inclusive, not exclusive eating pattern

Kathy Harlan, wife of USAWC student Lt. Col. Michael Harlan, said that the speakers really opened her eyes to the benefits of easy changes, like drinking green tea.

“We are used to seeing people drink green tea but never really realized all of the health benefits from it,” she said.

Bonci also outlined the components of a healthy lifestyle as the following:

- Actionable
- All inclusive (food, habits, activity)
- Support system
- Sustainable
- Realistic
- Not life-changing
- Affordable

“Overall this was a really great program,” said Lt. Col. Sean McDonald, student. “It’s a great opportunity to see what you’re already doing right, what you can tweak and what you need to stay away from.”

### **APFRI programs**

During Health Day, Williams also outlined the APFRI Senior Leader Health and Fitness programs, which include the student assessments. The assessments involve the following:

- Blood tests
- Blood pressure and heart rate tests
- Army tape tests
- Body fat percentage measured by the body composition chamber
- Sit & reach tests
- Leg strength tests
- Stationary bike tests
- Nutritional intake tests

At the outbrief station for each assessment, an APFRI health care provider compiles and reviews the results from each of the assessment stations, he noted. The outbriefer will identify the individual’s

strengths and areas where they could improve. Each student receives their results and educational materials to reinforce the importance of their assessment results in terms of cardiovascular disease.

### **Health Day background**

Health Day provides students better understanding of key preventive medicine and health promotion issues affecting them and their civilian senior leader counterparts. The event provides students with a great opportunity to gain a more strategic perspective on health promotion. The goal is to energize the student body and encourage them to take full advantage of their Army War College experience by improving their overall readiness and well-being. These presentations include world-class speakers who address the latest findings in health promotion and risk factor reduction research.

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