

Dr Kathy Martyn – podcast transcript – 8/01/21

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Hello, welcome to the University of Brighton podcast. I am Richard Newman so, 2021 is here. Let's hope it's a bit better than the last year. And we're back with the podcast, which explores the talent and research of our staff and students here. A quick bit of housekeeping compared from our podcast in 2020. We're going fortnightly with this podcast. We will have a few specials that we throw in every now and again as well. Now, what New Year's resolutions have you got? We get to this point of the year; I think every year. And after a pair of indulgence, many of us take up exercise programs. We think carefully about our food and drink, cut back on excess. And there's always the rise in the popularity of Veganuary as well, of course. So how best to get a better balance and how to stick to these New Year's resolutions? I'm joined this week by Dr Kathy Martin, principal lecturer in nutrition. Thanks for your time, Kathy. Nice to see you. And as always, with the guests and as always with the podcast, we start by getting to know a little bit about you, a little bit about your background. So, could you take us on a little whistle stop tour of your career up to this point?

Kathy - Ok, well, I first when I was younger, I was actually a nurse and I am a nurse by profession. So, my whole working life has been in and around nursing and health care. But whenever I was nursing, didn't matter whether I was leading in ICU or acute care services. I always believed that food and nutrition was really important. So, I did quite unusual things at that time because I went away and I did an undergraduate degree in physiology and then a master's degree in medical nutrition. So, the desire to understand more about the relationship between ourselves and our food and why we eat and what we're eating, all those sorts of things have been quite significant throughout my working life. And more recently, of course, I'm involved with some national international work with charitable organizations. And that's been fantastic, has given me opportunities to engage with work in India, the Americas, Australia. So, I'm an eclectic person. So, I am a nurse at heart. I'm always a nurse at heart, always a nurse first. So, I am also a registered nutritionist. And those two roles are sort of very much come together for me.

Richard - That is great, and you can see it from lots of different angles. And how long have you worked at the University?

Kathy - Far too long. Far too long. I think I got my long service award. I've been engaged with the University of Sussex and of course the medical school as well, which crosses both campuses.

Richard - But we're going to talk a little bit about the courses you teach on and your research a bit later on. Let's get stuck into our conversation. So first then New Year, new you. We see it everywhere. We see it every year. It's the same cycle over and over again. We've had the same conversations with our family and friends about the changes that we're going to make with our lives and how this is going to be the year that we become more healthier, all that kind of stuff. So, we all know that but we all sort of then just fall off the wagon a little bit. So how do we stick to realistic goals?

Kathy - Well, firstly, I think the most important thing is, is don't feel guilty for having enjoyed Christmas and maybe overindulged. I think as people, we need to have those moments in our life when we are enjoying ourselves and we are enjoying our food and hopefully not too much of the alcohol, but by all means, enjoy the odd glass or two of alcohol and socialise. We are very social in nature. So, I think the first thing to always say is never feel guilty. And if you've had an indulgent Christmas, I think this year in particular, it's been a very difficult year for a lot of people. And I want people to feel that they're going to start 2021 feeling more positive, having had at least a more positive end to the year and maybe that had earlier. So that's I think a number one thing is never feel guilty. And then if you're going to make an effective lifestyle change, you really have to decide on what that changes and it has to be something that's important to you. So, don't do something just because your friends or your mates or your family pick an idea. It has to be a change that you want to do and something that's going to be important for you as a person, because that's going to give you the motivation to stick with it and to think about how you might make that change in your lifestyle. And it's really useful when you're thinking to make a change in lifestyle, to not only think about why you want to make the change. So, what is it you're trying to achieve? You want to lose weight? Do you want to be a little bit more active? Is it both those things and maybe consider what might be a barrier to some of the things that might stop you doing that, so there's no good trying to change things when you know that actually there are a lot of things that are going to stop? You make that change and practical things, resources, money, time. OK, so be realistic about what sort of change you're going to be making and then set really small and attainable steps. If you think, for example, of losing weight, you didn't suddenly wake up on January the 1st overweight. This isn't something

that happened just because you indulge in Christmas. This is something that has been creeping up on you for possibly a period of time. So, don't expect yourself to have dramatic weight loss very quickly. You know, small weight loss over a longer period of time that's always been shown to be more effective than people that make some very dramatic changes. I'm sure, as you've already said, we all know people who start January with great positive ideas. But by February, of course, they fall off the wagon or they've had done that meal that they weren't going to have or they filled with cheese on that diet. So that in itself then becomes a bit of a vicious cycle. So, the big thing is it has to be a change that you want to do. You have to think about why you want it, what might stop you doing it, and then break it down to really small but attainable steps that you can say, yeah, you know, I have lost a pound this week or I have walked another thousand steps today or I did walk two more stops before the bus stop. I did go to the gym with my friends and I enjoyed it. So really small things that you then look back and chart your improvement.

Richard - Do you think sometimes the problem is that it becomes, you know, a more of a challenge rather than a goal? You're part of this big challenge that other people are taking part in as well, your friends and family. So, they go all in with one thing. So it might be Veganuary or it might be dry January and someone days and someone's just gone completely cold turkey. And you've completely changed your lifestyle in 24 hours. You're trying to anyway. And that's why it's so difficult to to stick to some of those goals. Maybe trying to find something which has a bit more of a better balance is probably the better way to go.

Kathy - Absolutely. And I think some people do need a challenge. I mean, there are some people who do respond very well to them. Right. It's Jan. This is the day. This is the year I'm going to make these changes. And some people do need that focus at the beginning just to kick start them to begin to think about how they may be making lifestyle changes in the future. But for others, you're quite right. This sort of thing I will do it in January. And it's almost as if I could do it in January, I don't need to do it in February or March or April or May because I've done what I set out to do, which was to not drink during January or to not eat as much during January. But of course, those aren't really changing your lifestyle. They're just achieving a challenge. But I do think that there are some people who actually will respond to that if they just need something to kick start them into thinking along different ways. And so, I think the secret really is, is once you've started whatever it is that you intended to do in January, as you're creeping up to February, say, OK, I've made a start on this change, I've done something, what am I going to do

in February? How am I going to sustain it? So, make yourself actively think about the next steps you might want to take. So, you make the decision that it's not just the January thing, although you need to accept that some people do like the challenge of just doing something very quick, very short. But I think in their hearts they're probably not planning on sustaining it for any length of time.

Richard - Hmm. Do you think in general, maybe this pandemic has got some people into some bad habits, maybe more treats at home? A lot of us, we can't go out and do what you've been used to doing for years. And so, because of that, you kind of compensate with something at home. You might because you're at home, you might end up seeing it more often.

Kathy - I think this year undoubtedly has changed all the ways in which we are living. I mean, it's been unprecedented, the sorts of things that we've had to overcome from the first lockdown to the second lockdown and the tier system. So, this this year, I think, has been an exceptional year. And there is some evidence that suggesting that there's been a greater purchasing of alcoholic drinks for in-house consumption. And and we're all very aware that more people are baking, more people are cooking. And of course, as humans, we do have this tendency to use food both when we're happy, but also when we're feeling stressed and anxious. So, I think there will always be people who do turn to food or turn to to drink as a way of dealing with the stresses of their lives. So, I think you're quite right. This pandemic will have had an impact on the way people are actually. Living and that might be added to by the slight overemphasis on possibly using takeaway meals because, of course, we can't go out to restaurants unless you're having a sustainable meal or substantial meal, they call it. And of course, the whole phrase substantial meal implies that you've got to have something quite big to eat. You know, this whole concept of having that substantial meal, if you're going to pub the emphasis on takeaways, you know, a lot of restaurants and a lot of the existing fast-food chains, but a lot of restaurants have shifted to take aways as a means of surviving the covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on them being able to open to the public. So I think this year has been a particularly interesting year in how those external factors have shifted our behaviours and feelings, an so many of us are working from home. We're sitting in front of a computer or a laptop and we're maybe not walking so much. And I was only saying to some colleagues the other day that I was horrified. One day when I looked at my step counter, I'd only done three hundred and sixty five steps from normally doing at least 3000 to 5000 steps a day it had plummeted to three hundred and sixty five. So I think

that whole way in which we're working has had a potential impact. So possibly we have got into more bad habits and then maybe what we need to do is to be more proactive and more positive in the ways we think we shift our new way of working to sustain our healthier living.

Richard - It works the other way, I guess, as well, because we've been at home so much more, maybe people that haven't been that, you know, maybe they didn't cook that much before. Maybe people more people have learned to cook and better structure in terms of meal planning, making sure there is a bit more of a balanced diet throughout the week and things are well planned. The fact that we've had more time to do that, more people might be in that situation, too, and actually be living a bit more of a healthier life rather than maybe getting in from work late and shoving something in the oven or something.

Kathy - Absolutely. I think for some people, this has been a wonderful opportunity for us to cook as a family, but cook as a group and using the resources that they have. But of course, there's also another side to that in as much as there's a lot of people who what covid-19 has demonstrated is, is the level of food insecurity and food poverty. And so really, we need to remember that for all those people for whom this has been a positive change for people like myself, I have the resources to put down, to buy food, to get food and to prepare meals and actually to waste food as well. So I don't advocate wasting food is not going to break my bank if I cooks a new meal, for example, and the family don't like it, of course, for some people, they'll be the other side of the coin. And for them, making those changes to the way that they're living, they may very much like to cook and want to cook, but they may not have the resources either in terms of food availability. They may not have a great kitchen. They may not have cooking facilities or fridge facilities. And so we need to remember that for those that has been a positive adventure. If I want to use that word, there's others that this has been a real difficult adventure because food hasn't been that easy for them to source.

Richard - Whilst we are on that, a good point you make. Do you think that's there's a bit more awareness from people because of things like free school meals and the campaigns, of course, which Marcus Rashford being at the front of in and the profile that that has given just raising awareness of food poverty. And do you think it's making more people think maybe about the food that they might waste and the food that they can donate and the ways that they can help?

Because we've seen the fact that food banks and the contributions that they've had to be making have just risen hugely.

Kathy - Absolutely. I don't know if we learn anything from the last year. What we need to learn is that is not to waste things and actually make it better. So, yes, I think you're quite right. I think that, you know, I think we're all much more aware of things like food, poverty, nutrition and insecurity and all those things. And it's a great time to be interested in food action, to be researching food, because there's so many potential avenues where people are now thinking about food where they previously haven't done, whether as a population, as a whole were as good as that. Again, I think it's probably too early to say, but I think it's more the agenda of conversations and more people are aware of it. And the number of food parcels that go each day with the food banks and things like that, and the growth in an organisation like Olio, which is trying to reduce food wastage from supermarkets and things. So all of those positive moves are things that we can build on in the future. And I think it's a really exciting time to be working within food.

Richard - January also means Veganuary, it's been growing in popularity each year, it seems again, it goes back to something we were talking about just how it is not about cutting everything out and going for a sort of a challenge and a lifestyle change. I mean, I certainly see it among my peer group. And even with ourselves in our house, there is a trend. Now, people are starting to realize that, you know, cutting out meat from a diet maybe during weekdays or something like that is becoming more of an increasing thing, I think?

Kathy - Yes, I think that is a very popular way of thinking. And I think as a health care professional and as a nutritionist, of course, our stance is always that people need to have a balanced diet. And we're not great fans of when people just cut things out. So we like someone to have a balanced diet. But there certainly is a group, a growing consensus now both in the research community, but in the public health fields, that a plant based diet is more beneficial for us in terms of our health and is probably going to have a positive influence in terms of impacting on our climate, our environment and all those other social concerns that in the last couple of years we've become much more aware of. And so I think a plant based diet which doesn't exclude meat, but just means that you're eating less meat and less processed meat is definitely a sort of across the world the way that we're advocating people should consider that that their food in

general and their diets in particular as health professionals, we never advocating a particular diet. And there is no magic diet. There's no diet that is suitable for everybody because, of course, people at different stages in their life, they've got different health status and some are older, some of frail, some are young. And therefore, your nutrient requirement is going to be slightly different depending on how well you are or how unwell. You all have a say that one form of diet is going to be the best diet it's a little narrow thinking and I think we need to be a bit broader and more understanding about food more generally. So, but definitely I think everyone advocates a more plant based diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, plenty of nuts and legumes and seeds. But that doesn't mean people have to exclude meat if they're particularly fond of it. But likewise, it doesn't mean that people have to eat meat either. So, people want to make a lifestyle change and don't want to eat meat. They can have a healthy, balanced diet.

Richard - Yeah, because this is one of the things that especially a lot of people might throw out as a counterargument to vegans basically to being a vegan. You hear it again. It's the same recycled stuff we hear every single year, isn't it, when someone says, well, how can you be getting everything you need if you don't eat meat, you're not getting the nutrients you need? And can you sort of quash that? Or is that is there some element to it?

Kathy - And there is some element to it, so people are often concerned about things, but actually to got a balanced diet. And so, if you look at all the recommendations across the world, whether are in the plate format or a pyramid format, what you'll see is the food arranged in different food groups. And some of those food groups will refer to a protein containing foods. And that tends to be things like meat. But of course, meat or meat alternatives. So, we've known for a long time that you can have a healthy, balanced diet without actually consuming meat. OK, there are some potential difficulties in terms of individual nutrients. But if you're careful about your diet, for example, often people say if you don't eat red meat, you might become short of iron. And whilst iron is easier for your body to absorb the iron from meat, of course, iron is available in lots of green leafy vegetables as well. But also it's often used in the fortification of common foodstuffs, such as breakfast. So there are other ways of getting those nutrients into your body. I think the secret is not to have a diet where you've just taken out one set of foods and not thought about how you might be replacing those nutrients with something else, because you do need that healthy balance of all the nutrients in your diet.

Richard - And like you say, different things will work for different people. And we'll come back to that in a moment as well. And Veganuary seems to be met with some opposition by some. Do you think it's the same, that it's you know, it's kind of a relatively new thing in the mainstream, a little bit like religious beliefs and people feeling like something is being forced on them? I mean, it might be it maybe a little bit different to vegetarianism. I don't know. I don't know how, especially when that sort of kicked off again, like decades ago, that I wasn't here to see how that was what the reaction was then either. But I just I just wonder whether is it because there's so much more passionate about it, because we are talking about not just, you know, it's not just a lifestyle choice. We are talking about the extra things you're talking about. We're talking about animal welfare, climate change, so many different elements. Do you think that's why it's met with some opposition from people that just aren't keen to give it the time?

Kathy - I think so. But I need to come clean here because I actually live on a farm. So actually, I come from a whole family of people who are animals for human consumption. So we're farmers. And I think the difficulty is as people become more aware of the impact of food production on our climate on our environment and those things, people are beginning to think about what it is that they're eating and how that the food that they're consuming and might be contributing to the changes that we're actually seeing. And I think the difficulty is that people, when they're talking about food, are very emotional, emotive and very emotional. So because the lifestyle choices people make are often not just about the nutrients they're consuming, but actually that's about their belief systems. It's about their values, it's about their beliefs about society more generally. And therefore, they're investing a lot of emotion and time into making this lifestyle choices. And again, I think working in health care, what you learn to do is to balance opinions. So you look you at the evidence, you look very much in balance. And I think often people who work in health and nutrition accused of just sitting on the fence a little bit, not making a decision either one way or the other. But the bottom line is that we do all need to be aware of where our food is coming. I'd love people to have greater awareness of food production. I think people need to be more aware of what it means to produce food for a population of people. I think we need to be more aware of what seasonal foods, you know, is it really to have out of season foods three hundred and sixty five days of the year, or should we be thinking about foods with more seasonally? I do believe we should be thinking about foods more localized so that when we're actually a little bit more aware of where our food has come from. So is it actually OK for somebody in Africa to be growing food solely for the consumption of us here in England, or

should we be much more altruistic and think, well, actually, you know, we need to have a broader view of food. So I think we're now embarking on a time when we're having some really difficult conversations about food, how it's produced and how it's marketed to us and the foods we're actually consuming. So I think we're in for some interesting conversations. And there's always a lot of emotion when you start talking about food.

Richard - Yeah, people do have a bit more about where their food's coming from the field to fork basically and I not to myself sound too righteous here, we made a decision about two years ago not to buy anything, any meat from a supermarket that we were going to we were going to get it from a local butcher. And know where the meat's always come from, you could do the same thing with veg. So to make sure that you know, so that you make sure you're eating things that are in season. I think. Also is no better time to be doing that kind of thing as well, is that because you if you're doing that, you're looking after, you know, where you know everything that's going on your plate, where it's come from. But you also in this pandemic with local businesses, you will say supporting your community.

Kathy - Absolutely. And it's a great opportunity for people to revisit how they shopped previously, had their shopping in the future. And if people have the resources and of course, it does always come back to that, unfortunately, is that food can be relatively expensive. So if you're short of resources, either financially or in terms of your housing or just in terms of the location in which you're living, you know, we have to be very careful that just because some people can afford to make a big lifestyle changes in terms of the food that they're buying doesn't mean that everybody can. So I think we need to also think about food in terms of access to food and equitable access to food for the population, a little bit better, and it might be that that means that farmers have to reconsider some of the ways that producing food. So, we have a much more sustainable agricultural system but also it means that maybe consumers have to think about the sorts of foods that they are purchasing. And of course, right in the middle, we have all the big supermarkets and the big supermarket chains. And maybe they need to develop ways of thinking about their role, both in the sort of main providers of food, but also the message that they're sort of sending to people in terms of what they're encouraging people to buy. So, I think we need some really good conversations between producers, suppliers, consumers to really get a balanced view and a balanced understanding that the benefits for the majority of our population.

Richard - That conversation may be further confused by Brexit, but we're not going to come on to that yet. Rising food prices etc. In a recent study by the University of Glasgow actually claims that pescatarians are less likely to develop heart disease compared to meat eaters and vegetarians. And what do you think? Do you subscribe to a similar argument?

Kathy - I think undoubtedly, I think for a long time now, we've been advocating that people should have more fish in their diet, OK, and particularly oily fish. And I think that's a well known and well trodden argument. The study in Glasgow is really interesting because it was comparing, I really question his judgement on most things, I feel like he is great with most things pescatarian diets with vegetarian diets. And so I was really trying to get a little bit more detail. But I think to simply take a single diet and advocate that for everybody is always a difficult position to justify in terms of the evidence and research, but also in terms of the outcomes. And I think which is why most people who are working with people related to food and nutrition we know is very boringly I'm often referred to as the fun sponge and I take away the fun of it. So, yes, we've been and we want people to have more fish in there for a long time. We've always put at least two portions of fish in the diet on a weekly basis. And so so that's not an unusual finding whether that can be translated into a diet for a whole population. It's another question, again, because there's too many variables and too many other factors that you would have to take into consideration another sitting on the fence answer, you know, I go back to that balanced diet all the time.

Richard - Similar to our first where we started our conversation, where we're talking about taking up new thinking about really what you're eating and going all in on something I'm mentioning earlier. But people may take up new exercise regimes as well from a recreational or semi-serious point of view. And then for someone maybe that doesn't do as that experience maybe of doing a lot of exercise, especially if you're throwing yourself into it a little bit. How important is it that you really do look at what you're eating to supplement that? Because you need to be able to help your performance and recovery, especially if you're new to this? You know, it's not going to be about throwing yourself into exercise and cutting out loads of food. That's a recipe for disaster.

Kathy - Absolutely, and I think if you're going to be having more activity or more exercise, you need to think about having a diet that's going to be supportive. But actually, that whenever I'm

talking to people that often they're telling me that I go back to doing exercise or activity there and I must think about my protein intake and how much more protein do I need. The reality is that unless you're an elite athlete, in which case you would have really good nutrition support or what I call a serious sportsman. So this is somebody who really maybe is not at the elite level, but is training hard and regularly taking form exercises. The majority of people just need to really just have a balanced diet. Think about where the protein sources are coming from and that would include things like eggs or soya or tofu or meats or chicken. So really think about your protein choices, but not necessarily thinking about taking any additional protein from the body. It's one of those urban myths that you just need an awful lot of protein to sustain yourself. I mean, we do need protein and we do need to have high quality proteins. But never an advocate of people going to buy the protein shakes or the recovery protein drinks or their pre exercise protein drinks, unless you really are being an elite athlete, in which case your level of exercise and the level of trauma that you're doing to skeletal muscles is that much is that much greater. It is not to obsess about things, stick to that balanced diet, make sure you're thinking about your protein choices and the things that you like to eat. Think about your water and fluid intake. A lot of people will embark on it if they're running, a lot of exercise and they won't think they've got to replace fluids as well. So we do have a lot of problems with people getting some day hydrated when they're exercising a lot, thinking about eating regularly so that if you know you're going to be going for a run, you know, this is not the time for also skipping meals and deciding that you're not going to be eating or you're not ready for a whole day like going into a run, because if I don't need to go for a run, I'll lose more weight or what have you. That's not, as you said, that's a recipe for disaster. But enjoying it, having fun, enjoy your food and enjoy having the exercise as well.

Richard - Yeah, I mean, during this, I think there are quite a lot of statistics that are back up there. A lot of people have taken up something, things like running over this last year. And and so, I mean, speaking for myself here, I really hope the races start again in 2021. And lots of people that are new to running may be setting goals to do that first half full marathon, maybe throwing themselves into a triathlon. How important is it then if they are training in a block of, I don't know, 12 to 16 weeks that they really look into how they are recovering from that? We're not talking at this elite level because we're talking about somewhere in the middle of what we were just talking about. Yeah, but it's not only sustaining that training, but also thinking about how they're actually going to fuel the event, because that's going to take a lot of I'm guilty of so

many trying nearly everything to try and get me through a marathon and maybe not found the ideal solution, but really, really experimenting with how you're going to fuel yourself because it's different for everyone.

Kathy - Oh, it is obviously different for everyone. And, you know, I think one of the best but so far to go is to find a group of people and actually train with the group of people. You know, partly because if there's a group of you who you can have the motivation, if there's more than one of you, it's not quite so bad on a damp, drizzly February morning to do that run. If you're meeting up with a few people and I know we've got to maintain social distancing and all of those sorts of things, but we can still have some group activities. But I think the best advice I've ever thought about is to do things as a group rather than in your own. And then obviously there are some great resources out there on the NHS and the Department of Health actually to produce the resources and guidance for people who are embarking on their first half marathon or their first marathon. So look at that guidance. And they do talk a lot about a balanced diet. They do talk about not obsessing about protein, making sure that you're having carbohydrates and that you're sort of eating well in and around your training period. So and I think that generally is the message that we're giving out to people in the group thing is really important, because then you can talk with people about the highs and lows of the experience you're going on and it might help you to overcome that barrier. I can remember a few years ago when I did my first twenty six mile walk, you know, I used to do all the sort of moonwalk, all those sorts of things. And I remember the first time I did it and I trained all over the science times. I walked for hours as a group and well, it didn't do in hindsight. I should have been trained in Britain because, of course, most of the MoonWalks, are in towns, and so I wasn't really aware of pavement's and the impact the pavement's would have. So again, it's about thinking about the activity you're going to do and think about what your goals are going to be, OK, so that you do your training is appropriate for the thing that you're going to do. You're doing it as a group so you can share ideas, get the motivation and keep sticking to the balanced diet. You might need to increase your protein a little bit, but do it with an egg or some tofu or some soy, don't buy the protein shakes so much.

Richard - And going back to your work here, Cathy. I'm interested to hear about some of your research interests, some of the things that you focus on. Can you tell us a little bit about what you like to work on? And I'm especially interested to hear about some of the bits you've done with dementia.

Kathy - Ok, we'll be quite eclectic when it comes to research, so at the moment, for example, we're doing a lot of what we call service improvement programs. So this is research or action research type methodologies where we're looking to improve patient outcomes. And in particular, we're looking at the nutritional care of patients in hospitals. So we're doing work at the moment to improve patient outcomes. And that's because we do know that going into hospital. It has a particular consequence, and this is quite a high level of malnutrition. That's not a new statistic. It's a very old statistic that she's been around since the 1950s. We know about a third of the people in our care in hospitals are undernourished or at risk of malnutrition. So it's about making sure that they have the appropriate food to help them both for their recovery. And I think covid-19 has highlighted that as well. There's been a lot of talk about the role of the incomes of people who are overweight, the impact of vitamin D. So we're doing a service improvement things at the moment. It's looking at something to look, but we're going to be looking at nursing home care homes as well. That's another very high-risk group, very frail. And they have something called sarcopenia, they're losing muscle mass. So we're looking at ways in which we can help them to stay healthier. You asked about dementia and of course, a lot of work done on dementia is a favorite robot called Parro. So how is my little white robotic seal and in Brighton And we've been very instrumental in enforcing the acceptance of Parro really addressing some of the concerns of practitioners have had in using him in terms of health and safety and those sorts of things. And with some colleagues, we've got some studies coming forward slightly delayed because of covid 19, but we're going back into clinical practice with our Parro robot to try and actually measure the impact it's having in terms of people's social engagement. And this includes things around food as well. So the relationship between being socially engaged and eating food, particularly if you have dementia, are already quite significant, because if you are engaged, able to communicate better than know, that often can translate into an eating a little bit more, being a little bit calmer and not having to have medications to regulate anxiety in those things. So that's really interesting stuff. I think I've done so much of my work at the moment is actually around people in people who are requiring our support and care.

Richard - A lot of people may not know about Parro the robot can eat a little bit for those that don't like sort of explain a little bit about that?

Kathy - Parro, it's an amazing thing, really. And how is a little white and robotic harp seal and it's developed in Japan. Japan has a strong culture of what we call companion animals or companion pets, which aren't really, you know, for them to keep them company. And the inventors of Parro noticed that Parro has a very positive effect on people's mood and behavior. And I'll be honest with you that when I first met, I was slightly cynical as to whether that would be any any impact at all. But one of the things I noticed in part when research with Parro was that he did have an impact. If people would reach out to him, they would talk more, they would engage with him, because as a robotic seal, he's not very frightening to our knowledge, we don't know anyone has ever been attacked by a baby seal. People have been scratched by cats or bitten by a dog. So if you use a robotic toy that looks like something like that, then it may not you may have those memories may resurface. Parro's proportions are baby like relative to the cat aggrandise, OK? It weighs about the same as the baby. So there's lots of tactile reasons. He responds to sound and touch and he makes a mewling sound. A few people dislike it. I do have a colleague actually who really dislikes the sound of carob, but a lot of people find him really engaging and if you turn him on people, he will people will start talking. They will start communicating. So it's been used a lot with people with dementia to help regulate anxiety and fear and being used with children undergoing chemotherapy, you know, as a sort of, again, relieving stress. Children with autism. So there's an ever increasing body of knowledge about how you use Parro in the therapeutic right, not as a toy. There's a therapeutic way to help in the management of distress with individuals. It's a great little thing actually doing this. You can see them all over the Internet if you're interested.

Richard - Yeah, you're clearly extremely passionate about your work and that will resonate with your students, no doubt as well. In the field you work in working in nutrition. So much interest I think more from young people now than previous generations.

Kathy - oh, absolutely. We've been we've noticed a big difference and a lot of my work is with nursing and medical students and nurses have always been interested in food, but I've noticed in medical students an ever growing. Interest in the relationship between the foods that you're consuming your health and how they are working as doctors, so with some colleagues at Brighton and at Cambridge, we've been doing a lot of work looking at how health professionals, including doctors, are engaged with nutrition to try and work out how we can improve what they need to know. It's really important to know what people need to know, how we can support

them to have appropriate learning and education, and how that can then be translated into meaningful clinical practice or therapeutic interventions. So we've got a number of things happening across the country, actually looking at various aspects of education, with the health professional students and including the doctors. So it's exciting times for medicine and health care.

Richard - And what would you say to anyone thinking about coming to study nutrition at Brighton?

Kathy - I think we are on the cusp of being a really exciting university when it comes to nutrition, both in our professional courses, but of course, we've now got oppositionism, nutrition, which is a new degree that we've just started. Students who do the nutrition degree will it's been accredited by the Association for Nutrition. So it's it's something that we have to get a recognised qualification at the end of it. It is a voluntary register, unlike some of our other professional courses. But we're hoping in the future that the nutritionist register will not be voluntary. It'll be a requirement, but that requires a little legal maneuvering strip of government circles and those sorts of things. So I think if you want to get engaged with the really new and vibrant group of lecturers, vibrant courses, then I think Brighton is definitely the place to come because at Brighton we're not afraid to have difficult conversations. So we will listen to different perspectives, different viewpoints, and we welcome people who are just curious to know and curious to understand a little bit more. So I think Brighton is a really exciting place. We also have a tremendously exciting third sector provision. So a lot of voluntary provision of related to food and wellbeing, both in Brighton itself, but in the surrounding towns and countryside. So it's a exciting a third sector projects running which engage food and mental wellbeing and food. And in terms of poverty, you know, trying to tackle those those issues about poverty and food, poverty and nutrition inequality. So I think I think Brightons's a really exciting place to come and study.

Richard - Great at the end of each podcast, Kathy, we we ask each guests the same questions, same for every guest - I'm going to rattle through tends to be a quick fire round. Really. So first one, what advice would you give to your younger self?

Kathy - Be more courageous I think as a young person, opportunities are out there. OK, so as a young person, if I was young again, I will be more courageous and I would take make better use of the opportunities that present themselves. So just to be more courageous.

Richard - If you could study any other course, what might that be?

Kathy - I knew you were going to ask this question, I have pondered this because I love psychology, I love sociology, I love science. But actually, if I had to study another course and it isn't another course, I would always choose nursing. At the end of the day, as a course, as a nurse, you have so much scope to engage with people. We are very privileged as nurses. We we spend a lot of time with our clients and our patients more than any other professional group probably. And as such, the scope of things that we get involved with is tremendous. There's so many different roles that we can engage with. So it's not really a new course.

Richard - Can you pick a favourite place in Sussex?

Kathy - The South Downs, particularly between Firle and Seaford in particular? The South Downs, love it. You know, being on the South Downs is just brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

Richard - Tell us something about yourself, which a lot of people may not know?

Kathy - Well. I am most relaxed when I'm doing something which is called walking the boundaries, and it's a farming habit and being brought up on a farm. One of the things you do on a farm as you walk around the boundaries or you walk around where you are and you just look around. Sometimes people look around and you're looking at the animals or you're looking at the soil, you're looking at the trees, you're looking at the environment. You're looking at the species, the wild animals. And in particular at my family's farm, which is in the forest of Dean overlooking the River Severn. And I reckon that if there is the best views ever from a high hill looking down over to the River Severn. So that's what I am my most relaxed, but I am just on my own walk in the boundary.

Richard - And finally, if you could invite three people to dinner, excluding family, so your ideal fancy dinner guests past or here, would they be and why?

River Severn - Wow, I thought about this as well. Firstly, I'd have somebody called Elsie Widdowson she was a dietician and nutritionist and she was really important for the government mandated additional vitamins to food and wartime rationing. It was just amazing woman and from as a lab up in Cambridge every year there is a National Diet and Nutrition Survey, which involves trying to understand what people are eating. Ok, I then have a chap called Thomas Davis. This is way back in history. Seventeen ninety four. He wrote a report for the Board of Agricultural and International Improvements what he was doing. He was describing how food is being produced and the relevance of food production for a population. And if you read his work, some of the things that he was saying or resonate with today and what we're thinking about today is I'd like to have him at the table. I'd like to have a conversation with him. Look at our current world and the current state of agricultural farming to actually see where we think, have we gone in the direction he thought we'd go in to have the other things better or things worse. So I'd like Thomas at my dinner table. And finally I'd have Emmeline Pankhurst because of being a woman in education. I've been very privileged life for the vote to have the full. I've been able to participate in all aspects of societies roles, I suppose, and yet that's relatively recent in terms of human history, that women have had that freedom. So I think it'd be very remiss of me not to have at my dinner table somebody who I think has managed to provide opportunities and openings for women or the start of opportunities and openings for women in a way that prior to getting the vote, women never had. So I'd have Emmeline Pankhurst and of course, because I love cooking I would cook a fantastic meal for all three of them with us.

Richard - I really should keep a tally of the guests that people choose. Emmeline Pankhurst is it would be high up the list, I think, of all the people that people have chosen, probably David Attenborough, just about top. Emmeline Pankhurst might be somewhere near that as well. Kathy, thanks so much for your time. I've really enjoyed our conversation today and hopefully people can take away some of those tips that we've been talking about to find a more balanced twenty twenty one and a very healthy, twenty twenty one as well. So thanks so much for your time. Really appreciate it.

Kathy - My pleasure. Thank you very much. My final tip but is to just enjoy the food you have, you know, and and be kind to yourself a little bit. Humans are human. We don't have to be perfect all of the time.

Richard - Thanks so much Kathy. I'll be back next week, please share on social media if you enjoyed this and subscribe too, via all the usual podcast platforms. Thanks for listening.