



## Holistic Healthcare of Virginia

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# The Western Diet: The Elephant in the Room

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There's a huge elephant in the room and it's making many of us very uncomfortable if not unhealthy. A commercial on TV uses an elephant to portray the heaviness of breathing issues associated with COPD. The Western Diet also is like this heavy elephant, weighing us down in more ways than one.

While most westerners like to think that we have the upper hand in most things: that our society, culture, laws, government, etc. are a little better than others—certainly better than Third World or poorer countries, in the end, someone else may have the last laugh. Yet, we are not talking about it—it's become the elephant in the room. An analogy that is closely linked to another—the one about not seeing the forest for the trees, one where it seems that there's something right in front of us and yet, we are unable to discuss it, nor see it for what it is.

All of our technology has apparently made things worse. It seems we are able to take things apart, and like humpty dumpty (to use yet another analogy) we are unable to figure out how to put it back together. We continue to look at the parts, unable to see that they are all needed together to make a whole. Several years back there was a cartoon made where many blind-folded scientists were all studying the same thing, but each had a different section of it. They were each announcing to their colleagues about their findings and the others would disagree because what they had their hands on was completely different, even though they were told that they all had their hands on the same thing. Of course, what each scientist had their hands on was a different section of —you guessed it—an elephant. Michael Pollan, in his many books, particularly *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* makes it clear that today's food scientists are each picking apart various plants, trying to discover the one element contained within its wondrous flesh that will be something they could extract and form into a supplement and sold for profit. They think "wouldn't it be great if they were the scientist to discover the newest element (e.g., vitamin, mineral, etc.), and figure out how to recreate it synthetically in the lab. Oh yes, there's money to be made for the latest breaking apart of food substances to find what we can all focus on getting more of in our diet for the next year (or decade).

The problem is, many of these "discoveries" are later found to be not so great for us—take margarine for one. Originally thought to be the best thing since sliced bread, only later to be found that hydrogenating oils is really unhealthy. Michael Pollan shares many other points in his book, the main theme of which is simply to eat real food (not the fake stuff, boxed, processed or otherwise made to make our life more simple—in the end really only complicates our life with the extra healthcare needed to help the body heal from the synthetic, instants, or other elephant in the room.