

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

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## The perils of the Atkins diet

Atkins diet is more expensive than conventional diets, yet no more effective

The Atkins diet is in fashion once again. Dr. Robert Atkins, the man behind the diet, died in April of an accidental fall, giving new life to his book, "Dr. Atkins' New Diet



MIDHAT FAROOQI

Revolution," which currently holds the number one spot on USA Today's best-seller list. The book is also No. 1 on the New York Times' best-seller list of paperback advice books. This is disappointing, considering that the Atkins diet is expensive and no more effective than a conventional diet in the long term.

The diet's revival can be attributed to the publication of recent scientific studies supporting it. The New England Journal of Medicine published one such prominent study in May. Since then, supporters of the diet have used it to claim that Atkins was correct all along: restricting carbohydrates and eating only fat and protein makes a good diet. They claim that this is the way to eat now and for life. However, the study does not completely vindicate the Atkins diet: the results, though promising, were only collected over the short term, and they may be deceptively higher due to incomplete analysis. As it turns out, this is not the way to eat, now or ever.

The study involved 63 obese men and women who were assigned to either a low-carbohydrate, high-protein and high-fat diet — namely, Atkins — or a low-calorie, low-fat and high-carbohydrate diet — the more conventional dieting approach. The researchers then measured weight loss at three, six and 12 months.

The study was a controlled trial — meaning that various other factors, which could influence the results, were minimized, such as the subjects taking weight-altering drugs. The study assigned the 63 participants to either diet at random, further reducing the likelihood of bias, and professional contact was minimal to imitate the approach used by most dieters.

The study showed that the Atkins diet produced greater weight loss than the conventional diet for the first six months. Those on Atkins lost 7 percent of their body weight, while those on the conventional diet lost 3.2 percent.

However, at 12 months, there was no significant difference in the amount of weight loss produced by the Atkins diet as compared to the conventional diet.

This point is the key, as it suggests that the long-term efficacy of the Atkins diet is similar to that of a conventional diet. But because the conventional diet is cheaper — fruits, vegetables and low-fat products are generally less expensive than excessive amounts of meat and low-carbohydrate products — why follow the Atkins diet?

There are two results of a good diet: one is losing weight initially, and the other is keeping it off. In the study, people on the Atkins diet gained weight they lost in the first six months off the diet, much more than those on the low-fat diet. The Atkins diet may have produced more weight loss but it also resulted in a larger weight rebound.

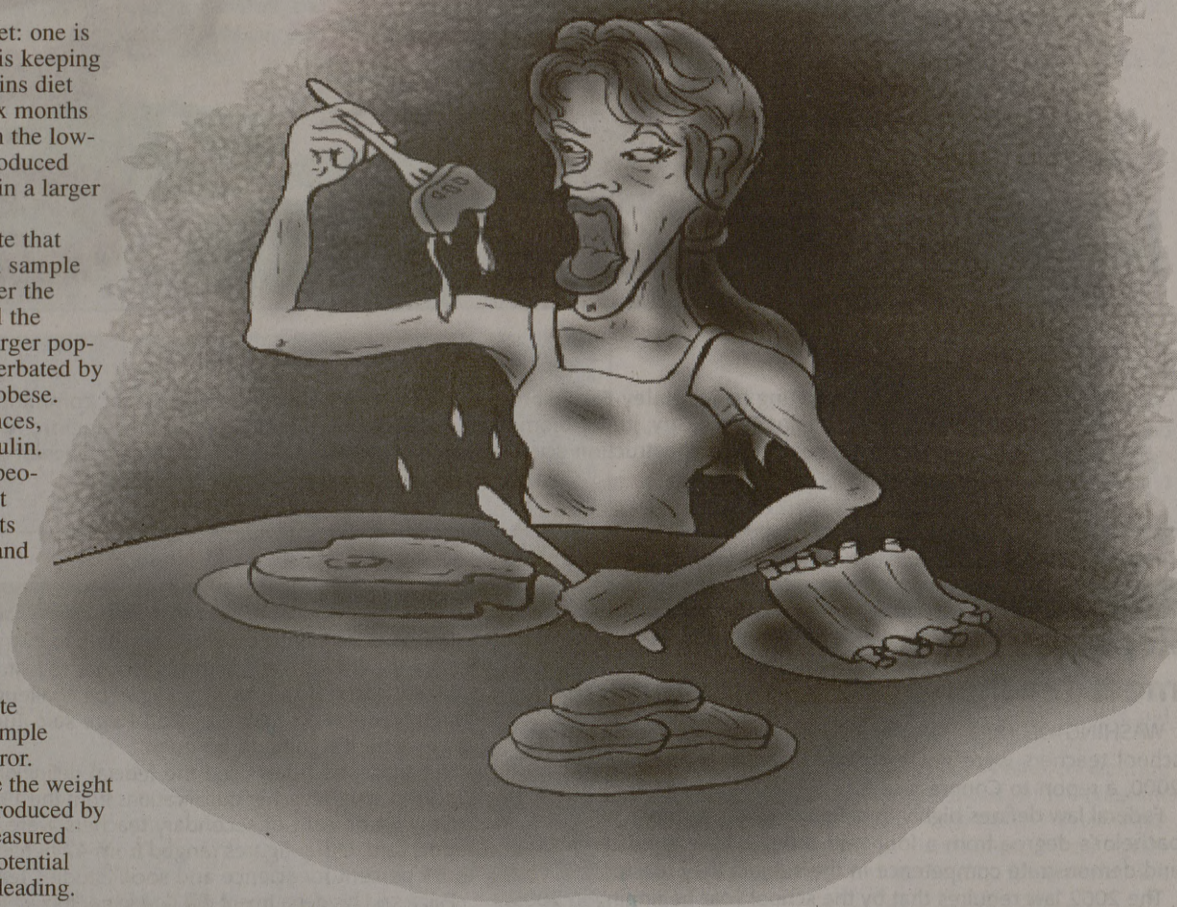
The authors of the experiment state that this rebound may be due to the small sample size: the smaller the sample, the larger the sampling error. But this applies to all the results: they may not represent the larger population. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that all of the subjects were obese. Some people have metabolic differences, such as a decreased sensitivity to insulin. Thus, the results might not apply to people who are merely overweight or not fat at all. More importantly, the results might have been different if normal and overweight people were included in the survey.

Not only was the sample size of 63 people too small, only 37 participants finished all 12 months. Forty-one percent of the participants did not complete the study, which further reduces the sample size, hence, increasing the sampling error. Furthermore, the results do not include the weight loss (or gain) of these individuals as produced by the two diets. Since the researchers measured only the compliant subjects, this is a potential source of bias. The results may be misleading.

The outcome would be more convincing if an intent-to-treat analysis, one that includes data from all the participants regardless of whether they dropped out of the study, was performed. A larger sample size comprised of all people, not just those who are obese, would further strengthen the results. But, experiments are needed to determine the long-term safety and effectiveness

of the Atkins diet. Until then, it remains a fad diet that works questionably at best and is an expensive eating habit at worst.

Midhat Farooqi is a senior genetics major. Graphic by Angelique Ford



## Conservative media outlets on the rise Fox News Corporation, Clear Channel Communications are worst offenders

For the past few decades, the word media was rarely heard without the adjective "liberal."

Still to this day, anytime there is any news that is contrary to the conservative viewpoint it is passed off as liberal bias. At one time this assertion was probably accurate, but, with a run through the channels, anyone can see that the supposed liberal media is now overpowered by the sensationalism and frenzy of the conservative media.

The fantasy of a liberal media is dead, and fairness, civility and trust have gone down along with it.

It is perplexing to hear people cry bias when one takes a look at who the media are. Many owners of the supposed liberal media are big contributors to Republican campaigns. Lowry Mays — the owner of Clear Channel Communications and more than 1,200 radio and 17 television stations in the United States — gave more than \$58,000 to the Bush gubernatorial campaign in 1998 and facilitated the transfer of more than \$130,000 in soft money from Clear Channel to the Republican National Committee during the 2000 presidential election, according to the L.A. Times.

Fox News Corporation gave more than \$420,000 to Republicans in the form of soft money in the 2001-2002 election cycle, which stands in stark contrast to the \$95,000 donated to Democrats, according to [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org). The tilt is not limited to those two companies, as General Electric, parent company of NBC, also gave \$400,000 in soft money in the 2000 election cycle with 75 percent going to Republicans.



JUSTIN HILL

From the owners to those reporting the news, the bias is far from left-leaning. Fox News has become what seems to be a breeding ground for crazy right screamers. Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity and Neil Cavuto could never be confused as leftist. Fox News has become the pride and joy of the right all the while proclaiming they are "fair and balanced." Having one dissenting voice, Allen Colmes, does not make the network balanced.

MSNBC has been following Fox's lead by hiring Joe Scarborough, a former Republican congressman, Ann Coulter and Michael Savage. MSNBC also fired Phil Donahue and his top-rated show for what many said were dangerous views of dissent against the war. In place of Donahue, MSNBC hired right-winger Savage, who was rightly fired last week for calling a homosexual caller a "sodomite." As reported by the Washington Post, this was not the first time MSNBC went too far on trying to court the right. MSNBC also had to fire the compassionate conservative Coulter in 1997 for telling a disabled war veteran on the program News Chat that, "People like you caused us to lose that war."

With the media's move to the right, the civility and ability to view the media as a serious and credible news source has been tarnished. The right has taken up the role of attack dog instead of reporter.

O'Reilly would rather yell at you and cut your microphone than be challenged to an open, honest debate. Savage and Coulter would rather scream and call names than open an arena

for ideas. Hannity, a Fox News anchor and radio talk show host, has written a book called "Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty Over Liberalism." The title alone accuses those who are not conservative to be against freedom.

Rush Limbaugh screams at you on your way home in the car about the bad left, O'Reilly screams at you at night while flipping through channels and a look at the bookstore portrays a collection of memorable one-liners against the left such as, "Why the Left Hates America and Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism." Even CNN's Lou Dobbs has taken on a brash right stance. If the liberal media is still so prevalent, where are they?

When Reagan decided the Fairness Doctrine was no longer needed, he opened up Pandora's Box. Now, the screaming heads on television are not held accountable for what they say and have no incentive to give other views.

The dissolution of the Fairness Doctrine coupled with the recent media deregulation from the Federal Communications Commission spells big trouble for the consumer who depends on mainstream media to get fair and objective news. Currently, media outlets run the risk of becoming carefully crafted ideology machines for hire. Look at Fox News and the other ideology-driven news outlets; this is the future of mainstream media if things do not change.

Justin Hill is a junior management major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Loss of journalism makes A&M hard to recommend

The decision to get rid of the journalism program is short-sighted and ridiculous. For a school that craves a diverse-thinking population, getting rid of a department that tends to lean more to the left is obviously not well thought out.

As a journalism department graduate, I am appalled that Dr. Charles Johnson has decided to get rid of the department. And since when does addressing students' need in journalism include getting rid of the program? That is some twisted thinking and will only add to Aggie jokes everywhere.

I am currently a journalism teacher/newspaper adviser for a large high school near Dallas and I find myself actually (gag) encouraging my students not to go to A&M and attend elsewhere. Dr. Douglas Starr taught me a lot about journalism, which I now teach

my students. Other high school journalism people I talk to all say wonderful things about him and the department. However, those same advisers also recommend to the students other schools and do not recommend A&M.

Does the school really care? I don't think they do. They turn down so many students each year who want to be Aggies, so it's no loss to them. But this is one Aggie who is now ashamed to say she has a degree in journalism from A&M.

Abby White  
Class of 2000

#### The Battalion will suffer from journalism closure

Mr. Swanick, I'm not denying the fact that the journalism program has problems, because it does. And I know about these problems because I have a journalism degree.

I experienced first-hand the shortcomings of the department. But I currently have a great job and will continue at a top-notch communications graduate school this fall. And my degree did not hurt me at all in these endeavors.

You claim that the students who write for The Battalion are journalism students that should know better. Not every student employed by The Battalion is a journalism major.

For that matter, at other papers, not every person has a journalism degree, which is a good reason to have journalism programs at universities like A&M. And The Battalion is not going anywhere, even though the department will be cut. Do you realize what that means?

With the journalism department gone, the number of students who work for The Battalion who know how to write in a journalistic way will drop even lower which means The Battalion will get even worse. Too many people

rely on newspapers, radio, TV and the Internet for their news.

How can we expect the news to be written accurately and correctly if we don't educate people who are interested in journalism. I don't think the department being cut is an insult. I do think it is an easy way out. I'm not

going to be arrogant and claim that I have the solution, because I don't. I'm just glad I graduated before I had to see the department cut and put up with arrogant fools like you.

Becky Speer  
Class of 2003



Wednesday, July 16, 2003

000 or less (price must offering personal possessions charge. If item doesn't sell, end to qualify for the 5 d is cancelled early.

### REAL ESTATE

1/2 home, buy or lease \$89,900. no. Bryan. Mark. 846-6827.

### ROOMMATES

2.5 new house, \$350/mo. no. Bryan. 713-724-7072.

apartment, \$462/mo., all bills paid 1 on bus route. Kim 774-5198.

2/1 Apartment 1-yr. lease, no. +1/2bills, W/D, balcony. Call ASAP! 220-0195.

2/1 house, College Street TAMU, \$270/mo.+1/2bills. 3-3120.

smoking 1-roommate needed, low house, starting asap. Bathroom nice size bedroom, large kitchen. \$350/mo.+1/3bills. 324-8381.

brand new 3/2 brick house, no. +1/2bills. 832-642-0088.

roommates needed, 32nd house, no. +1/2bills. 680-8747.

New 3bdrm/2ba/2gar house, no. TAMU. W/D. \$400/mo. 4-2277, 281-388-0519.

non-smoking, quiet roommate, 3bdrm/2ba duplex, \$300/mo. W/D, parking, shuttle bus. 8/15, 2403 Britain Court. 4-4054.

smoking female roommates wanted, new 3bdrm/20th townhome, move-in, year lease, \$375/mo. minutes from campus. (80)848-8488.

roommates needed, Own house, no. +1/4bills. 680-8747.

smoking roommates needed, 1500sq ft, starting 8/15/03. No pets. 3yr. old home close to campus. Fully furnished, except bedroom. Cindy @ 694-7647; 469-441932.

8/1 or earlier, non-smoking, for 4/3 new home in Milliea, w/d, \$400/mo. +1/4bills. at 512-396-0766.

mate needed, 3bdrm/2ba house, 8/15/03, \$400/mo. no. in shuttle. Call Nikki @ 813-210-215-6072.

roommate needed, For April, a mobile home. \$275/mo. no. in 896-2119.

wanted for 3/3 townhouse in parking, blocks from TAMU. +1/3utils. 979-694-0892, 957-9177.

dent wanted. Share 400sq ft other Grad. Own 200sq yard, shuttle, \$400/mo. 774-5198.

or 1-2 female roommates in 3bdrm house in Bryan, CA. 414.

mate needed, nice 3-yr-old house, 3bdrm/2ba, fenced yard, +1/3utilities, available August. 0-5166.

roommate to share brand new house w/garage in C.S. area. 214-957-7712.

roommate ASAP. 4bdrm/3ba, big house, no. +1/4utilities. 281-684-3333.

roommates for a house in Bryan, no. tub, pool table, on bus route. 27.

needed fall and spring, call all Wes 214-886-4061.

wanted, \$216/mo. +1/3bills. 5-9823.

### SERVICES

Defensive Driving, Let's laugh-a-lot!! Top insurance discount. M/T/W/Th (6pm-9pm). Fri/Sat (10am-2:30pm). Inside BankAmericard welcome. \$25/cash. Lowest bid by law. 111-Univ. 846-6117. Show-up 30min!

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### BATTALION Classifieds

place an ad, phone 845-0569