As patients stream into your office motivated to eat more healthfully in 2018, a new series of online courses can prepare you to help them make the nutritional changes needed to prevent—and help treat—heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

The AMA is partnering with the suburban Chicago-based Gaples Institute for Integrative Cardiology—a nonprofit focused on enhancing the role nutrition and lifestyle changes play in health care—to provide physicians with a new, three-hour online nutrition course for clinicians. The interactive, self-paced program offers evidence-based information that provides the foundation physicians need to begin an effective nutrition conversation with patients. The course promotes a team effort regarding nutrition and provides the necessary tools to help physicians make an empowered referral to other nutrition professionals.

The course starts with a fact that many physicians may not realize: Dietary factors are the single most significant risk factor for disability and premature death in the United States, according to a study from the U.S. Burden of Disease Collaborators published in JAMA.

“There is a great need for doctors to talk to their patients about nutrition, but most physicians haven’t had the training they need,” said Stephen Devries, MD, a cardiologist and executive director of the Gaples Institute for Integrative Cardiology. He noted that studies show medical schools devote fewer than 20 hours to nutrition and relevant continuing medical education on the topic is sparse. Dr. Devries, an AMA member, said this course helps to bridge that gap.

Physicians can complete the online course at their own pace. Interactive screens walk doctors through facts pertinent to the benefits of nutritional interventions. Physicians have an opportunity to check their knowledge throughout the course to make sure they understand the material being presented, and links to studies supporting the material allow learners to dig deeper. The course is broken into four, 45-minute modules, as outlined below.
Why does nutrition matter to your patients? This first module addresses common challenges clinicians face, scientific evidence supporting how diet can prevent and help treat conditions such as heart disease, as well as the health benefits of certain foods.

Dietary fats and patient health. The second module examines a number of questions about dietary fats, including why fat is important, polyunsaturated fats’ effect on health, the dangers of trans fats; and cholesterol and its functions.

Helping your patients understand carbohydrates and protein. The third module helps physicians learn how to classify carbohydrates, understand artificial sweeteners’ impact on blood glucose and assess how much protein the body needs.

Counseling your patients about nutrition. The final module is a skill-building experience to help physicians use the nutrition knowledge from the first three modules, using real-world clinical situations and patient scenarios.

AMA members are eligible for a 20 percent discount on the Gaples Institute’s CME modules. Contact the Unified Service Center for the discount code at (800) 262-3211 or msc@ama-assn.org. AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ is available.