Balance Your Hormones For Better Brain Health Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Background

Welcome to this episode of the Reverse Alzheimer's Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Heather Sandison, and I'm so excited to introduce you to my friend, Dr. Margaret Christensen.

She's been the host of a other very successful Summit talking about Mycotoxins and their impact on the brain and the body. She's also started a Carpathia Collaborative, excuse me in Dallas, Texas, where she is a well-known functional medicine doctor.

And she works alongside Anna Cabeca, who you have also seen on this Summit at the Institute for Functional Medicine. She has been a faculty member for over 12 years and she first became interested in Functional Medicine 15 years ago when trying to solve the riddle of her and her family's very complex health struggles.

Unbeknownst to her at the time, there were consequences of sick B or toxic mold exposure. And she's really dedicated her life to making sure that other people, not just her her own patients, but even more people, she can have a bigger impact so that other people don't have to go through the suffering her family did.

Margaret, it's such a delight to have you here. Welcome. Thanks. Thanks, Heather. And you know, I need to update that bio. It's 23 years ago that, you know, I've been doing this for 23 years.

And because. I was going to say I. Heard the aforementioned things. Yeah, sorry. You going to update that one? Yeah. Well, I'm happy to be here and, you know, happy to talk about the connection of, you know, hormones again, to brain health and really to environmental toxicants.

And because that's such a huge piece of what we're seeing now. And I but I failed to mention that in your bio, you have been an OB-GYN for, what, 33 years, a 35.

Right. Yeah. Yeah. So I started out as OB Yeah. And I did that for ten years, you know, in the hospital, delivering babies, doing surgeries, you know, handing out birth control pills and yeah, you know, that cut out, drag it out method how I was taught and you know, numb women up, you know, from stem to stern, you know, and make them make them afraid of their bodies, you know.

And so I had to deprogram all that. Well, you got that conventional perspective of hormones and how we relate to hormones and what medications we can use to alter them and manipulate them.

And and then you've got this other education, right, this other perspective, and you've really kind of blended the two in this unique way that I love to dove into.

So what is the connection between hormones and the brain? How do hormones impact the brain? Well, I mean, they're absolutely critical for brain function.

We know, you know, for the for the long run, again, for, you know, estrogen, for memory, for sleep quality. Again, testosterone is a building hormone.

It sends signals to create new connections. Progesterone is a very calming hormone, very calming on the brain. It helps you. Yeah, it helps, you know, when actually, you know, post traumatic brain injury.

So progesterone has a lot of both for men and women. DHEA, which is one of the adrenal hormones.

Hormones and Brain Health

Again, it's an it's an androgen. It is a it's a building hormone. So all of those things are incredibly important. But the big ones that really affect I mean, those those affect how neurons grow and communicate with another one another.

But it's our stress hormones, our adrenaline, our cortisol that really impact, you know, brain function a lot and how our brain gets maybe stuck in what we call limbic loops.

And so all the different thyroid hormone, of course, thyroid hormone is important for creating energy inside any cell, no matter where that cell is in the body.

So you have to have the ability to create energy inside your cells. And so insulin we know that insulin, of course, helps to regulate blood sugar. Too low or too high can be problematic.

The brain runs on glucose and or ketones. So ketones I'm sure you've got somebody talking about ketones. So again, managing insulin is so critically important.

If your blood sugar is way too high, it's very pro-inflammatory, just sets everything on fire. So all of these hormones work and dance together and need to be ideally in balance.

And what we've been seeing, particularly in the last four years, has been severe, severe imbalances in hormone in stress hormone levels in particular, that are fueling imbalances in many other arenas.

There's a lot of controversy around replacing hormones and hormone therapy after menopause. And we know or even during menopause. So we know that women are at higher risk for developing dementia.

There are two thirds of Alzheimer's patients and we can't change our gender. So what do we do about that connection between estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, DHEA, pregnant, alone, all of these hormones as they decline, I guess, naturally with age?

Well, you know, that's a that's a great question. And this is this is where the idea of some hormone replacement therapy comes in and for, you know, for longevity.

But before you ever get there, you have to really understand where are hormones coming from? How are they produced in the body? How are they circulated in the body? How what is their mechanism of action once they reach the cells?

And then how do you get rid of them once you've used them up? And because all of those play important factors in in how you're going to prescribe hormones.

And the challenge is, you know, some some folks go to, you know, an anti-aging weekend and learn about pellets and. Yeah, and just do high dose hormones on everybody.

And it's an absolute disaster, you know, and then and then you have, you know, the very conservative, you know, conventionally trained dog. So don't take any hormones.

So there is a balance in between. And if you understand, again, that production, transport, sensitivity and disposal of the hormones and you know how to utilize them in very small amounts, but you have to clean up first.

So you have to clean up the gastrointestinal tract. We are our hormones are balance. They're 80% of our neurotransmitters. I know you've had plenty of people talk about that.

Our producer, our gut and our gut bacteria are very important, for example, for processing estrogen and testosterone. So if your guts way off and or your liver is congested, it's so full of, you know, chemicals that it's trying to process.

You're taking 15 prescription drugs, you're eating a standard American diet. You're not be able to process and help to get rid of those hormones. They go dump into your gut.

They are bad bacteria. They cleave the hormones off of your the proteins that are there to tell you, hey, get rid of this is tag this for garbage and they recirculate.

So if you're going to be using hormone replacement therapy, you start with calming down the brain first, supporting the adrenal glands, because you start with adrenaline and cortisol coming from the adrenal glands because those are the major influence on everything else.

So you want to bring those down, you want to help to nourish and heal the leaky gut. And you've had plenty of people talking about, again, the role of autoimmunity in everything and in neurological dysfunction that gets triggered in the gut.

So you want to heal the gut upregulate your detoxing mechanisms, open your looks, attic systems before you start putting people on hormones. And and that's how we do it.

And ideally, you're going to be measuring all these things at the same time. So when I'm looking at somebody, I don't ever just say, Well, here's a hormone patch or here's a hormone cream without looking at your an adrenal stress index, looking at your cortisol levels throughout the day, without looking at your blood levels of hormones and some of that.

And then looking at urine and metabolites, which way is your body going? And then I'm looking at insulin and for panel thyroid at the same time. So I'm looking at everything at the same time.

And then I'm asking a lot of other questions, too, that can impact brain function. Yeah, absolutely it is. This is a deep and complex conversation. And how do you help people navigate that kind of risk benefit analysis, or do you think there is risk in in hormone supplementation?

Are there some patients where you would say it's not worth doing that for you outside of, you know, if their gut isn't well-regulated yet, it sounds like, you know, preparing for it is is one step.

And after you check that box, those boxes, you're a proponent. But is there anybody where you would say, you know, don't even bother. I'm you know, I think that that's very individual.

Hormone Therapy, Risks, and Testing

I mean, you know, theoretically there's things like blood clots and cancer. But I'll tell you I'll tell you what that here's the misconception, thinking that, for example, estrogen causes breast cancer in and of itself, estrogen does not.

It is the environment in which the cell lives, which has all the toxicants that create the hormonal disruption. And I think, you know, if I if any message that I have and I'm sure plenty of other people I would, you know, would second this on this talk.

It is the environmental toxicants and chemicals that we are being exposed to that are creating the groundwork. They're laying the kindling, they're building the they're you know, they're the wood.

And then and then you throw a little gasoline on the fire. And that's you know, that can be the estrogen, but in and of itself, it's it's not a problem.

So I guess I approach each person very individually, but particularly if they are having neurodegenerative diseases or I want to take a look at that. You know, somebody who's in a massive autoimmune flare, this is not that's probably not the time to start them on on HRT, because that can exacerbate that.

But, you know, to me, it's much more a an issue of looking at the environmental toxicants and detoxification

strategies, which is of course, is a huge part of the the bread is in protocol and in the work that you are and you have been doing in terms of brain health.

So can you help us connect those dots between toxins and hormones? How do toxins play a role in dysregulated hormones? Okay. That's a really great question.

Really, there's four or five mechanisms that we're looking at. So the first one would be molecular mimicry actually where the hormone itself or excuse me, the toxicant itself looks like one of our hormones.

And we know that, for example, if you've got mycotoxins yellow brown is one of the hormones excuse me, one of the mycotoxins that looks like estrogen.

So and then there are other mycotoxins that we know that disrupt testosterone pathways. There are other ones that disrupt thyroid pathways. So that's just one example.

Those are mycotoxins, molecular mimicry, other things like pesticide IEDs and a lot of plastics. Again, they have molecules in them that look like estrogens, many of them.

And and and can disrupt hormonal pathways. So that's molecular mimicry. That's one way that can do it. Another way has to do with actually activating and irritating the axis, the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis, so triggering you into a fight or flight response, making a bunch of adrenaline, making a bunch of cortisol.

So, for example, if you are breathing in poor air quality, whether it has more mycotoxins in it or you live in a city and there's high levels of, again, particulates in the air and pollution and that or you live out in a, you know, on a farm that's been being sprayed with glyphosate and atrazine all the time.

And you may be breathing those things. And so you're breathing those things in into your nose. At the back of your nose is your olfactory nerve, the nerve that that is the shortest nerve in the body.

But it goes right back from your sinuses, right back into the limbic system, part of your brain, and it bypasses the pituitary gland stock on the way.

So if you have a history of chronic sinus infections, chronic inflammation, you're breathing in these toxins, they can actually travel along that olfactory nerve right into the limbic system.

And we'll talk about what that is in a minute. Maybe you've had other people talking about that that's controlling through the hypothalamus, the amygdala and the hippocampus.

That's controlling all of our hormonal flows. So so just irritants and inflammation in the olfactory nerve, triggering the axis, just being under severe stress to also triggers that axis.

But in terms of looking at toxicants and chemicals, they can trigger it that way. The same thing with breathing them in into your lungs. You can be triggering the autoimmune system in your long to start a cascade of all kinds of distress hormones.

And you're sending a distress signal to your brain which then impacts the production of all the rest of your hormones. So so that is another way that it can be disrupted the other way environmental toxicants, again, we're talking about all kinds of stuff here.

We're talking about prescription medications. We're talking about our genetically modified food supply with all its attendant chemicals and pesticides in it.

We're talking about the plastics we're being exposed to, etc., just swallowing that stuff, impacting the gastrointestinal lining. We already know, like I mentioned, 80% of our neurotransmitters are being produced here and we have to have good, healthy bacteria and microbiome in order to process and excrete excess hormones that

have already been used up.

Toxins, Hormone Disruption, and Detoxification

So if you have gastrointestinal issues that have been created by your environmental exposures right there, you can you can have you can have issues. And then then many of these toxicants end up disrupting your detoxification pathways and actually blocking them, preventing them from working.

And those of us who have a lot of what we call genetic snips or changes in your genes or detoxification can be really impacted in a much greater way. So that's another mechanism of of of hormonal disruption.

And there's another one, and I'm blanking on it right now, so we'll come back to it. When I think about environmental medicine, this is kind of what we call this this medicine of approaching toxins and thinking them as thinking of them as a root cause of disease and then getting rid of them.

The first app I think of and 75% of this is identifying the exposure and stopping the exposure. Yes. The more and you know, sometimes that requires detective work and sometimes it takes a while and measuring it can help to open our eyes to that maybe happening, because it's not always apparent, particularly in the case of mold and mycotoxins.

Now, the more complicated piece that many people will come to, doctors like you and I for it is how do we get these out? So I love to hear high level strategy of, okay, we've identified a toxin, a heavy metal, a chemical toxin, a micro toxin, a bio toxin.

Then what do you do to figure out, okay, how do I generally help with their bowels? Or like, what do we do next? How do we organize ourselves around deciding how to get them out?

Okay. Okay. So how to get them out. I'll answer that question because I remember the other piece and that's mitochondrial disrupt disruption and dysfunction, which of course that is the core of the work that you do, is understanding how these bio toxins, which are fat soluble toxins, these little tiny fat soluble toxins, heavy metals, again, things like mycotoxins fungal toxins, you know, from for example, from Candida, the plastics.

And we're talking about viruses and and pieces of chronic viral infections or other type of infections, including things like Lyme and it's co-infections.

But viruses like the Epstein-Barr virus and the COVID virus and really the COVID spike protein, it's the spike protein that's the problem damaging. So these are these bio toxins get into the cell membranes and they get into the fat soluble mitochondrial membranes and they disrupt mitochondrial function, triggering a whole spill out of contents and triggering, you know, severe autoimmunity.

So so paying attention again and understanding the mechanism of action of how these bio toxins work to damage fat soluble cell membranes, including myelin sheaths as well as the mitochondria. That's a big piece of it.

So in terms of what are some of the high levels way of detoxification of course, I'm sure you had the basics is that you start with, you know, what I what I say to everybody is clean food, clean water, clean air and a clear mind.

So those those simple steps starting with organic food, number one, you know, and then you may need to really kind of to do an elimination diet and you know, paleo diet to just and get repair.

So I'm sure you've got somebody talking about all of those things. We move sometimes a lot beyond that because we see some very complex chronic neurodegenerative issues.

And so I've I was trained by a Patricia Cain doing the phospholipid membrane protocols and, you know, membrane health resuscitation. So we'll use both oral and IV phosphatidylcholine.

I think the source and the quality of those is really critically important. Some of that has changed a bit, but what you're doing with functional choline is you're helping to replace damaged cell membranes and damaged mitochondrial membranes with new healthy things.

And then oftentimes we're using I. V. ozone along with ultraviolet light, to go after chronic infections to help clear and again to help to upregulate the immune system in the correct way.

And, you know, a lot of bio toxins. What they'll do, including the spike protein, it suppresses the innate immune system, the part of the immune system that goes after infections and goes after Lyme and goes after cancer cells.

And, you know, it helps keep you would go bad for viruses. That part of the immune system is suppressed and the adaptive immune system, which is producing the cytokines and the antibodies is over is overexaggerated.

So the opposite of Lyme, right? In Lyme you often see the immunoglobulins and the antibodies they actually suppress. So it affects the immune system in a slightly different way.

But well, yeah, but again, what's interesting that where there's Lyme, there's usually mold. You know, you go for the mold first before you treat the line because because what's happened is the innate immune system was suppressed by the mold that allowed the Lyme and or its co-infections to to be able to invade the body and get a hold and all that.

And then subsequently, depending on how long it's been there, then you'll see, you know, you know, complete dysregulation. So, you know, I would just say, you know, for anybody who's got Lyme and I cannot tell you how many people have been treated for Lyme for years, particularly with IV antibiotics.

And it was missed that they really had toxic mold first and are again these other things the pesticides and all that. So and because we are seeing, you know, so much long haul COVID and long haul COVAX, really what we're finding is that it's the spike protein no matter what its source and unfortunately, the more spike protein you've been exposed to, the more likely you are to have problems unless you've already been on an anti-inflammatory, primarily plant based, you know, diet with adequate levels of vitamin D and vitamin A and, you know, modulating your stress, though, those things are simple.

So we so we're using I. V. ozone, high dose of vitamin C, we're using the PHOSPHATIDYLCHOLINE, both oral and I. V. We are doing also I. V. NAD. And AID is involved in the energy production cycle, again in the mitochondria and its production can be depleted again by a lot of these environmental toxicants.

And so that can be useful in some chronic fatigue situations. We're also using methylene blue a primarily orally low dose naltrexone. So those are some of the more advanced things.

But the other I think really critical piece to for anybody involved in any of this is the mind. Yeah. So yeah, you mentioned NAD, which I think of is one of those things that builds resilience certainly in the mitochondria, but also kind of gives people back that resilience psychologically in a in a really unique way.

I certainly have had the experience of having Ivy and Adi and feeling like, okay, I can take the world on again. Like, I'm not burnt out anymore. And you'll hear that from from people from time to time now.

And so kind of the burnout, the adrenal burnout, but also traumatic brain injuries can be a stressor or a trauma. So we have kind of physical traumas and psychological traumas that can change our hormones and certainly affect our cognitive function.

Can you speak to that? And what we can do about it really? Yeah. Well, again, if so, if you're talking about physical traumatic brain injury again.

Trauma, Limbic System, and Recovery

So we you know, immediately after somebody has a traumatic brain injury, we have you know, we have protocols about, you know, no electronics, you know, complete rest, complete the rest of the eyes, you know, the complete rest of the whole brain.

You know, a strict anti-inflammatory diet, high dose omega threes. We use progesterone giving oral progesterone because it has, again, a very calming effect on the brain and and then and then work on rebuilding again re nourishing the brain to repair it, you know.

And then as far as trauma and let's just kind of circle back around with trauma and and the limbic system. So the limbic system case, nobody's explained it.

I'll just do a little simple the let's the three major organs as part of the limbic system three major parts of the brain the the hypothalamus, the master regulatory center, the brain where all the inputs from the body are coming in to say, okay, is it time to eat?

Is it time to sleep? Is it time to procreate? Is it time to, you know, go take a poop? That's the that's the hypothalamus. And then you have the amygdala, which is the part of the brain, the scanning 000, you know, is it is a tiger going to jump out at me at time?

And the amygdala is what signals the adrenal glands to produce adrenaline run or fight, run or fight, and then followed with cortisol and then the hippocampus, which of course is the memory center, which is your whole area of focus.

So all those three things are tied together in the limbic system. And when the limbic system is triggered, whether it is by a physical injury, a traumatic brain injury, whether is by a chemical injury, or whether it is by a, you know, chronic stress and trauma.

PTSD, a chronic logger at low, low grade stress, we call it complex chronic PTSD, so that your limbic system is turned on all the time and you're constantly send all signals of distress all the time down to your the rest of the body.

Your body can't rest to to rehabilitate itself and to regenerate itself. So when, you know, like in the last four years, when we were being fed fear upon fear upon fear upon fear upon fear upon fear keeping everybody in a state of of uncertainty, of not knowing and isolation, masking as well, keeping everybody in this chronic state of fear.

Then you get stuck in limbic system overdrive. And that is part of also what's triggers histamine release. And I'm sure you've had probably somebody talking about histamines and mass cells are all part of exacerbating existing exacerbating neuropsychiatric syndromes.

So when you're under and then if you on top of that, you've had adverse childhood events or aces and being exposed to trauma, you know, neglect or trauma growing up, you know, witnessing abuse, being in addiction or alcohol situations, all of that is triggering that limbic system, keeping you in trauma, keeping you hardwired to be in fight or flight all of the time, which doesn't allow your body to repair.

Yeah. And so how do we work our way out of these things? And instead of getting high in the loop of like, oh, my gosh, this is overwhelming and I've been through so much trauma and is exposed to so many toxins, how do we start hurting the clouds and finding solutions to this?

Yes, that's a great idea. And that's I've got a summit coming up on that called Hormonal Havoc, the COVID fallout and how to fix it. But again, what we we have to start with, too, is is calming down our minds and calming down our brains enough.

And there are plenty of different techniques to utilize with that, whether you're using breathwork, whether you're using mindfulness or a little meditation, whether use a brain tap device, whether use an alpha stim device, being in therapy, being in groups.

So that that is part of it, recognizing that you're not alone, get in community, get and talk with others so that you don't feel isolated because is isolation.

And that was one of the most devastating factors that particularly killed our elderly during COVID was isolation. So getting community, so that that's real simple get connected to something bigger than yourself, whatever that means for you.

You know, for those from a faith background, really, you know, drawing upon that and your your connection to source, whatever that looks like, that can be incredibly powerful.

But also understanding that our body has powerful, powerful healing mechanisms. We have an innate in healer within that can help direct and guide us. We just have to get quiet long enough to stop it.

I would say turn off the TV, be very mindful about social media and what you're being fed. We are being literally brainwashed. You are being literally brainwashed, particularly through conventional, you know, or through mainstream media.

80% of the advertisement on there is big pharma. So that tells you something right there. 80% of advertisement on the news brought to you by Pfizer, brought to you by Turner, Rajiv Jibo.

So you're being you know, so I would turn that off. Turn off violence. Don't watch any violence. Don't watch anything really sad or depressing. You want to stay away from all that.

It's okay to be aware that it's, you know, aware of what's happening, you know, in the Middle East, aware of what's happening in Ukraine. But don't sit there and watch it over and over.

And if you want to do something, go donate, you know, go donate, do some services. Yeah, I'm. Particularly if you are a loved one struggling with cognitive decline, maybe that's really hard.

Resources and Closing

Our brain doesn't know the difference of whether or not the war is happening next door or across the world. But when we are struggling with cognitive decline and Alzheimer's, we really don't know the difference.

And that will affect sleep and and stress hormones and our brains just can't make so we can't rationalize it. And so staying out of that mix, particularly if your loved one is struggling with cognitive decline, it's just so crucially important.

Well, I would say that, you know, the really the two things to go after, too, are sleep and gut function. So if you can start there, anything that you can do to improve the quality of your sleep and I'm sure you've had, you know, folks talk about that, which includes turning off your electronics and blue light and all that.

And again, the content of what you're watching. Like you said, the body doesn't know the difference when you're watching something versus you actually they're experiencing it.

It's going to trigger the same cascade of stress hormones in the body. So right now, getting community work with people who are making a positive change, work with a health coach who who is looking at who looks at what's wrong with you instead of what's wrong with you to help make those things.

And then you just start with but like I say, you connect the dots, keep it, keep it simple. Always hope for health and healing. Clean food, clean water, clean air and a clear mind.

So if you find yourself super anxious all the time, then let's start working with the mind. And I'm sure you have plenty of things that you recommend.

There are so many great insights here and so much wisdom from your experience, both personally and professionally. It's such a privilege to have you here.

Would you please let our listeners know where they can find out more about you? And also, when is your Summit going live? So Hormonal Havoc. The COVID fallout and how to fix it will be airing in June of 2024.

And then also you can reach me through molddetoxdiet.com, all of the same principles that I just talked about with every bio toxin illness it is including spike protein illness you can address.

We have Mold Detox Diet for the lay person and we also have a Mold Immune Module which really helps to explain what's happens in the whole immune system with any of these bio toxins, including infections, and that's for practitioners.

So those two things and then also carpathiacollaborative.com It will be also carpathiahealth.com it's a little bit easier to spell. Carpathia was the ship that picked up the survivors of the Titanic.

We have the Titanic of Western medicine treating the tip of the iceberg. And the Carpathia is the ship of functional medicine coming along to pick up the survivors.

And then we start looking at root causes, what's under what's what's under that iceberg. I love that visual. It's it's so helpful and such a great illustration of kind of where we where we find ourselves in terms of conventional medicine.

Dr. Christensen is such a pleasure to have you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your time. You're so welcome.