Better Health Starts With Better Sleep. Here's Why Transcript

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Introduction and Background

Welcome, Christine. I am so glad that you agreed to be interviewed on the summit. Now, what I'd like to have you do, Christine, is introduce yourself and explain why you have this area of expertize.

Thank you so much, Dr. Wahls, for having me. So, I mean, naturopathic physician. I've been practicing almost 13 years now and I see patients often who have what we label a neurological condition.

So I see patients who have these complex chronic illnesses tried. A lot of things happen to a lot of people. I was one person's 50 points, doctor that was mind blowing.

And so I had the skill set to really think outside the box and really see the body holistically and see common denominators and foundational practices that are really important for recovering people's health, as well as fine tuning and individualizing a plan for each patient.

So my patients teach me every day. They're my greatest teachers and, you know, we just need more and more people out there like you and everybody out there at the summit who's banding together to get these patients better, faster.

Okay. So now the topic where I'd be talking about is a recent discovery. I certainly did not learn about this in medical school, and that is the lymphatic system.

So, Christine, can you explain what that is for our listeners? Absolutely. And as you mentioned, it's a newly discovered system which I think is mindblowing.

Right. Here we are in 2023 recording this, and we're still learning about these amazing human bodies and the lymphatic system was discovered. And, you know, in medicine, right, we study often a model that is often a dead tissue.

Or we look at cadavers. And so we can often not discover something until we have the technology to discover it in a living system. And so that's what happened with the lymphatic system.

What the Brain Lymphatic System Does

And so this lymphatic system is our glial dependent lymphatic system. It is the lymphatic system on glial. So glial is a particular type of cell in the brain that is the supportive cell around the neurons that do the thinking, the sensing and initiating movement.

Now back to you, Christine. Thank you. Thank you to Margaret and to Mark in you brain, too. And that specific glial cell is really what we call it? Asked for site.

I'll let you define an astrocyte if you want real quick. Well, the astrocyte wraps around the blood vessels and helps with transporting nutrients to the brain cells.

Yeah. So fun. So what happens is, is this glial dependent lymphatic system actually has the job when we sleep to bring nutrition and oxygen to the brain and really remove waste and that removing waste piece is key for our brain health.

And really what we found is that this system is most active when we sleep. And that's why a good night's sleep is so important for anybody, but especially when you're recovering from a neurological disease.

And our brain actually shrinks 60%, they found. And this movement of limbs actually flows along the arteries. And there's basically water or fluid regulation is regulated by these astrocyte that are like these star like shape cells that you mentioned.

And they have what we call envy them on their feet. They have aqua pore and the channels are water channels that regulate this fluid flow to bathe that neuron and remove waste.

And then that lymph moves along the venous system are the veins out of the brain and gets recycled as part of the lymphatic system. So we can break all of that down.

But it's really, really important because what we've found is that people who have impaired sleep or who have damaged their lymphatic system are more at risk for cognitive decline and neurological diseases.

So it's a really foundational part. When I read about this, I thought there would be so much more, you know, just I guess the neurologists would be jumping up and down like this is such a big part of, you know, healing the brain.

We need to make sure that everybody knows about it. But I'm excited to share this information. But it's always surprising that people are still learning about it.

You know, in the EMS world, there's a sub type enema. So D neuro maladies, optica syndrome disorder that is very much connected to aqua porn and this lymphatic drainage.

So very important there. This is also so important for people who have cognitive decline, which we're beginning to realize is a big issue for people with M. S.

The longer we have it, the more at risk we are for cognitive decline. And that is one of the leading causes for job loss, because we can't process information as rapidly, as quickly, as efficiently, and it gets harder and harder to do.

Our jobs at work. Mm. Mm hmm. And, you know, we want an optimally functioning lymphatic system because neuron communication is really I mean, it's overly simplistic in this conversation, but the best that we can take out the trash and any of our extracellular matrix or any of the, you know, spaces in the body, the better and healthier cells are, they're able to communicate.

And we have less neurodegeneration. And, Soledad, that can lead to these symptoms. So it's a it's a really important part of how we were wired to function.

Why Sleep Matters for Brain Drainage

Now, I think everyone who's listening here by now has figured out, okay, that it's a really important what what can I do in terms of really nuts and bolts?

What could I do to improve my lymphatic drainage that if my people have M. S. in their immune so they're probably already fatigued. They're probably already having difficulty with sleep because sleep problems are so common in people with Hamas and they're severely fatigued. So.

But what are their options? Yeah. So let's start first with sleep and then we can kind of go through some of the things that might be blocking optimal lymphatic drainage out of the brain, because the lymphatic system is this highly interconnect network.

And when there's stagnation in one area, it can affect distant tissues too. So I'd love to cover both if that works for you and the audience. So let's start with sleep, right?

So, you know, we have these different phases of sleep, right? So we have the non-REM sleep and then we have an which includes a deep sleep. And deep sleep is a really important part of our sleep.

And it's a delta wave sleep. It's when the brain is really slow, but a lot is happening. Our immune system is actually working well. Our hormonal system and this is actually a time when the lymphatic system is active.

It's actually most active in REM sleep. REM sleep is rapid eye movement. It's the time where we dream the most. We dream at all phases of sleep. But this is the more dreaming part of the brain.

It's a really wild time. Our bodies are paralyzed, but our our body is really active. Our heart rate is going and our blood is pumping. And that blood pumping and that activity is actually really helping to move this fluid, these fluid dynamics in the brain at a higher speed.

And what's really interesting I have learned, Dr. Wells, is that there is this transition from deep to REM sleep through the different cycles throughout the night.

And people who have a lot of trauma or a lot of stress in their body, they often are low in certain neural transmitters, especially GABA, and they're not able to make that transition as easily or readily as other people.

So they might be have a deficit in one of these areas. And when we have a deficit and one of these areas of sleep, then we have less climatic activity.

So my point being is twofold. I want to make sure that we're aware, not only just going to sleep, but making sure we're having healthy sleep and going through these four phases of sleep for the most activity.

And then also just learning about deep sleep being really important. And then REM sleep I've learned to in my study, it's the only time during our 24 hour circadian rhythm that the brain is completely devoid of noradrenaline.

So that's a very big stress hormone in the body and just in modern life. And if you're going through a chronic illness and you have trauma, like all of us have been, you know, stressed and have too much adrenaline in our systems.

But it's a really big reset point for us emotionally and also so for our brain to heal and repair. So I thought that was just a little interesting tidbit.

And so we have a lot of things that we look at for sleep hygiene, not to pause for a moment before I go through that checklist. Yeah. You know, if we are not having dreams sleep well, it becomes very difficult for us and we begin to hallucinate.

We become so psychotic, we become delusional, so dreaming. Very, very important. Deep sleep, very, very important. So I'm going to hand it back to you so you can give our listeners some tips on how we improve the quality of our sleep.

Yeah. So definitely a sleep hygiene, right? Is this idea of, okay, how do we like make our environment and our rituals around sleep as healthy as possible and then we can talk about some things to actually improve sleep so I'm really big into blackout shades can I'm creating a kind of go to sleep sanctuary.

You know, this is a time where we hopefully are in a restorative state for about 8 hours a night, hopefully for most people, at least, especially if you're recovering from a chronic illness.

And, you know, with so much more information around EMR, we want to try to you know, we can't block and shield, you know, every, you know, EMF exposure unless you live in the middle of, you know, the mountains or the woods at this point.

But, you know, we want to reduce as much as possible. So we try and we want to try to keep our devices out of our bedroom. We want to limit blue light exposure 2 hours before bed.

If you can turn off your Wi-Fi router at night or at least, you know, make sure the distance is your friend with the EMF.

Sleep Hygiene and Supplements

So having things away from you is going to lessen exposure. And we've seen some preliminary information and research on the impact of melatonin these things have.

So it's quite important. And then there is this idea also of sleeping, you know, a little cooler. Our body temperature naturally decreases when we sleep and there's even things I mean, I have a chilly pad on my bed, but there's other ways to do this that you can get in your room a little cooler at night and that can enhance deep sleep enough before phase of sleep.

So those are some, you know, rituals. I think a sleep needs to be a state where, you know, we're moving into the night, not stressed. So don't look at the news.

Don't do anything really struggling or, you know, really stressful before bed, because this is a this is a time to create peace and healing in your life.

So I think that's really important because we're all so connected nowadays. We can tune into any type of information. And sometimes that's, you know, we have to be really discerning and, you know, intentional about what we consume.

So those are, you know, kind of lifestyle things. And then I use, you know, again, people are coming to me and I often give them supplement recommendations.

So there's two supplements that I primarily think about when people are looking for natural sleep solutions. One is melatonin and why some of melatonin and this really and tactfully, we could probably do a whole lecture on that.

But I know you had already you mentioned Dr. Deanna minnick already did a great lecture on melatonin. The more you learn about melatonin, it's like all roads lead back to melatonin in the body.

It's a potent antioxidant and neuroprotective. And it helps get our brain into a sleep state and and also assist the conference system from clearing toxicants out of the brain.

There's some good research on that. So melatonin is great. And then I mentioned I used a lot of GABA because GABA can help enhance the deep and then the REM sleep and then the type of GABA that you're using, you want to make sure it's well absorbed.

I use a topical GABA that I've created, but there's Liposomal and Pharma GABA. So you want to just a good quality GABA that you can also use. So those are two things if you need support and the advent of modern life, more people have the tools and technologies to track their sleep.

So I have a lot of patients who have the aura ring and you can record your sleep without having the Bluetooth on at night. So all those things I said about enough, you can reduce your MF exposure while you have an alarm ring on, but it can do the recording.

And then when you wake up, you can kind of see what your sleep data was. And so it's a great biofeedback device. I'm not promoting the article necessarily.

There's many technologies out there, but we can get granular with that data now. We can see, did we have enough deep sleep? Did we not get into REM? And what's our heart rate variability?

Do we have good oxygenation? Do we have are we prone to sleep apnea? And this is really important because as we're doing things like melatonin and improving your you know, sleep environment and potentially GABA, what's the impact rate?

And you can help, you know, make a really good protocol for yourself and know the impact and feel good about

what you're doing. And also just feel rest assured that your brain is healing when you're doing these things.

So that's that's my checklist. You know, the thing that I would add is pay attention to light. Yeah. So in the morning, get yourself outside, preferably within 2 hours of sunrise and look at the sky, look at the clouds so you can get some ultraviolet light in into the back of your eyes and your retina, because that will speak to the circadian rhythm in my brain.

And then in the evening I like to shift my light to red lights. I have that too. I thank you for mentioning that. I usually do, but I missed that. But I have those true dark lab lights.

And again, there's other I'm sure is out there, but it's a circadian light bulb where you can switch it from day to, you know, red light. And, you know, I have to work at night sometimes after I put my daughter to bed.

So if I'm doing that, I have my screen saver, that is the flex screen saver. So it's taking the blue light out of my technology. I have my phone on night shift and then I have, you know, my red light.

I like the I have a red light lamps. You know, I get a little heat. So I'm kind of surrounded in this light. And if you turn on a normal light after you've been surrounded and it's kind of after sunset, it almost like it hurts you.

You can see how stimulating light can be. So definitely try that out. I think that's a big, big and often still very much overlooked the way that we're wired.

I use a ton of photo bio modulation and photo dynamic therapy in my practice and it really makes a difference. You know? And people with M. S., we're worried about fall risk.

Yeah. So we're told that sleep with lights on so we don't fall. I tell people, use a red light. Yes, they happen. I think Dave asked for his company and again, I'm sure there others has like a little nightlight that's red.

And then they have the, you know, the red lights even. I see the nursing moms even use them, you know, like that. There's a lot more things to, you know, set up your environment so that you can, you know, make sure you get up, go to the bathroom, whatever you need to do.

But you're not like, awakening the brain and disrupting your sleep for a period of time before you get back to bed. I predict again, for everyone who's listening, I encourage you to find a few ways to get red bulbs into your home.

So when the sun goes down, you can switch from conventional lights to these red lights in that I have my light design in my home, so in the morning I use light that has more ultraviolet light and so natural daylight light.

Improving Lymphatic Drainage in the Neck

And then the afternoon I have a warmer spectrum light that looks much warmer. And then again when the sun goes down, I turn those lights off and I just use my red lights.

And so after doing that for a few weeks or a few months, I predict you will find that it's very objectionable to not have your red light in the evening.

Yeah, it creates such a serene environment, you know, really creating a ritual at night and you really feel quite peaceful. So I'm so glad you mention that.

And I, you know, this whole field of circadian lighting, there's even architects looking now at creating spaces, healing spaces with exactly this type of lighting that you've mentioned, Doctor was awesome.

Now, what do you think are the most impactful things that our listeners could do if you had to pick just two or three things for them them to do to improve their acrobatics?

So let's think about first. So I mentioned, you know, the the lymph flows around the heart area along the arteries and then access the brain alongside the veins.

So in my practice, this kind of area here is a big highway. You know, there's a lot going on in your neck, right? So that blood flow going into the brain, out of the brain, we got the nerves, you know, the vagus nerve, the brachial plexus.

We got the thyroid. You know, there's a lot going on in the neck, right. And we have cervical lymph nodes. So our cervical lymph nodes can be often chronically congested and inflamed, especially if you have chronic infections like Epstein-Barr or Lyme and co-infections or other things that your immune system's working on.

Right. And I'm working on continually supporting with these things. And so this I mentioned, this lymphatic system is highly interconnected. So there's stagnation in one place and it can affect drainage in another place.

So through my friend Dr. Marco Ruggiero, he found that when people had a buildup of lymphatic fluid in the brain, if you actually did congested the lymph nodes in the neck, we enhanced brain drainage and we helped with any pooling of length in the brain.

So there's lots of ways to do that now, we created a cream that you can put on topically called lymph flows. We have a lot of our patients do that at night.

And then there's all these little, you know, technologies. There's also hogwash. And those are in the skincare world. But they're these jade like structures that you can actually move the lymph on your neck.

And when we're moving the lymph, when we think about it, we have two big entry points in the lymph. One called the thoracic duct, which is on your left side and right around your collarbone and the right lymphatic duct.

So, you know, the lymph has to go somewhere, right? So we're trying to move this lymph down so it can get recirculated. And then there's a really nice open highway.

So before bed, you can really massage your neck, do the wash, find a cream that works for you. Some people even sleep on an inclined Terrie to help with the flow of live out of their brain at night and also helps with breathing.

You know how many inches I'm talking two inches, four inches. Five degrees. The 2 to 4 inches, I would say so. Not not a lot. You know, you can get you know, people can put like a book under little risers.

Yeah. So yeah. Now do something like that there. Now frames like you can even tilt up, but you can just make it, you know, even with your pillows, but just getting your head slightly above your body can help with that flow of drainage out of your it out of your head at night.

And I got a lot of positive feedback around patients doing that. So those are two, you know, relatively simple things. I could lose weight more, but I think those are really good foundational start because if you're not doing that, you know, then anything else that you pile on might not have as good of chances of working.

So it would seem a simple massage from the angle of your jaw down to your clavicle. A couple of strokes every evening before you go to bed might be very helpful.

Yeah. So that you could put a same size book on each side, under the head post at the head of your bed. And then the third thing I would suggest is work on sleeping more on your side as opposed to face now.

Yeah, yeah, that's a good one.

Closing Remarks and Resources

And if you're, you know, I mean, this is not a conversation around this, but if you're snoring or if you have one of

these biofeedback markers that looks like you're having low oxygen, you know, at night or a mouth breather, you know, that's something to really look at correcting because that can really improve your sleep quality and lymphatic drainage as well.

Probably the happiness of your bed mate. Oh, stop. Right. We want to be sure that we have a happy bed, mate. I think that's very important for domestic tranquility.

Now, this has just been such a fabulous, fabulous interview. Christine, where would people find your website? Thank you. It's just very simple. It's my full name, Dr.

Christine Schaffner dot com. You can find out more about my clinic, my podcast and all the good things we're up to. I believe Dr. Christine is going to have a lovely e-book that will help you get a little more insight about your lymphatics and more detail that we covered today and some more strategies you can do to help clear your lymphatics again.

Christine, this was marvelous. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. Oh, thank you so much. It's quite an honor. Thank you.