Beyond Medication Stacking: A Psychiatrist’s Look at Autism Care Transcript

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Opening on autism medication concerns

So as a psychiatrist, I get a lot of patients coming to me with autism who were essentially just nuked with psychiatric drugs, big doses of mood stabilizers and anti-psychotics.

And so the parents come to and they get into Dr. Joseph, you know, what else can we do because I'm killing my child. You know they're developing cardiovascular disease, they are metabolically unhealthy.

They've gained all of this weight. So I want to remove the medications, but I have nothing to replace it with because the model I trained with was send them to speech therapy and OT and give them risk at all.

You know, and everything else is just, you just have to tell the parents, they just had to deal with it. you have live with, that's just the way it's going to be and just move to acceptance.

How hopeless. Hi, welcome to the MAPS webinar series, Healing Tomorrow's Future. We are thrilled to be bringing you this series packed with valuable information and education within our community.

My name is Honey Rinusella and I am the Executive Director of MAPS, the Medical Academy of Pediatrics and Special Needs. Within these webinars, we're able to empower clinicians on the knowledge and tools to support patients facing a variety of health challenges.

For more information on MAPS or to register for a conference, please visit us at www.medmaps.org. Thanks for joining us on this journey towards a brighter, healthier future.

MAPS webinar introduction

Okay, so we were just talking previously to sitting down and I had asked you what your thoughts were about this whole view of how we approach medicine.

This is your first time at MAPS. You spent all day yesterday and pretty much the most of today listening to most our lectures. Give me some thoughts on what you are viewing how approach we medicine?

Yeah, just really empowering is the first thing. So as a psychiatrist, I get a lot of patients coming to me with autism who were essentially just nuked with psychiatric drugs, big doses of mood stabilizers and antipsychotics.

And in the very short term, or right at the start, it can be helpful, but over time, the kids gain weight, they develop side effects, They develop tardic dyskinesia, and they start having movement disorders.

Psychiatry, autism, and medication harms

And that just, it's just not a great long-term solution to just be relying on exceedingly high doses of pharmaceuticals. And so the parents come to me and they get into, Dr.

Joseph, you know, what else can we do because I'm killing my child? You know they're developing cardiovascular disease, they are metabolically unhealthy, They've gained all of this weight.

Um, and there just like foggy, like they, there less able to do things. And so I want to remove the medications, but I have nothing to replace it with because the model I trained with was send them to speech therapy and OT and give them rispedol.

And it's like, and you know, that's kind of like and everything else is just, you just have to tell the parents, they just to deal with it. You have live with, it that just the way it is going to be and just move to acceptance.

How hopeless. Yeah, it's terrible. And it is heartbreaking for the families. There's so many moms out there and fathers who are ready to do pretty much anything for their children and to say, hey, there's nothing really else you can do is really disempowering.

When I do the foundations course, and also when I've been listening today, You can just tell that this is like grassroots clinicians here who are actually in the trenches and they care deeply about finding every single little detail to optimize the life of their kids.

We learn about the diet, we learn getting rid of toxins. You know, what I think was really great is hearing what you were doing with Vincent about how you have a son with autism and how he has a really rich life and he likes to work out with his father and they do the tandem bike riding and it goes on dates and now that he's learned to spell and communicate, you know he figured out that it likes a Moscow mule when he goes out to the bar.

And it's like, people aren't really thinking about it in this way of like how do you optimize their lifestyle, clean up their diet, bring down the inflammation, help them with their gut to really quiet everything that's going on in their bodies and then give them a really meaningful life.

And so when I see all of that, I'm just like man, there's so much you can do to get them feeling healthy and just give him a a real amazing quality of life and so that That's really empowering for me.

So if I had gone the other route, I actually shudder to think of where he might be today. I felt very fortunate to have found this type of medicine when he was two years of age.

You understood the whole point of the foundation's track was that we're trying to teach doctors to peel them back to your point and look at other things outside of psychiatric medication, correct?

Yeah, yeah. And I've seen that happen with so many families for years. Dr. New did a really good job talking about the traditional allopathic model where you just disregard any other symptoms that don't make sense and anything that's left over, you slap another diagnosis on it.

You could have a kid who has autism, And they've been on psychiatric medications for a long time. And now, and they're even sicker than they were before.

Now they are more irritable and more aggressive.

Root-cause medicine and family hope

Oh, they just have bipolar disorder now. Let's give them another drug. So that's really where that leads. If you neglect the the root causes of what's happening to them, whether the mitochondrial dysfunction and the difficulty clearing the toxins, the inflammation that may be going on.

If you don't address that and that just simmers in the backgrounds and you're just stacking drugs and drugs on top of that, well, now the original problems keep on getting worse and now they have all these drug-induced side effects and many doctors will just keep stacking meds.

It's like a cascade. Yeah, and it leads to a shorter life. it lead to more frustration and hopelessness with the families. I think a lot of the times that can actually make their behavior worse, like especially the medications.

And the parents throw their hands up and the kids end up in a group home because they- That's what you and I were just talking about too. When I, think it's the biggest tragedy is when a of these children can't communicate, right?

They're all presuming they're not in there, but like we just witnessed on stage, with my son, we know that they are 100% mentally aware and capable. They just can get their body to communicate it.

But yet then like society and medicine typically just throws them on something that might be internally destroying them and they have no way of communicating.

And then if they a behavior that may be a reaction to the medication that's being prescribed, then they give them another medication to help that subside and then another and another.

Then the child never really gets to root of why the behavior existed in the first place. It's a horrible way of approaching medicine, but I do have to say that you're probably one of my favorite attendees at this event because I feel like you really are understanding how the brain and body are all completely connected.

There's such a strong drive for me to understand this because I really feel deeply about the suffering of the kids I look after. And we've been talking a lot about autism and the more severe autism where there's difficulty communicating.

But even ADHD, now I see a lot more just ADHD and it's just on a spectrum to autism. That's the way I look at it now. A lot of the things that cause autism cause ADHD.

And so I have a lotta kids and also adults that are just blaming themselves as well. I mean, to be able to give them something that's more hopeful, because so many of them have brain fog, they're irritable, their aggressive, the falling behind their peers, and they don't understand what's going on.

And they put on all these different drugs. They're just like, I'm just a failure. I just don' have the willpower, just not strong enough. Everyone else is out running, everyone else can focus, my siblings are doing it, but I am just the mess up in the family.

It's such a heartbreaking mental state to be in until someone can come and explain to them, no, this is what's going on. You know, there's inflammation going, they're suffering and it's not your fault.

It is actually harder for you to have to push through all of these things and then to able to explain that to the families as well so they can look at their behavior in a different way.

And it is not just making excuses, it just empowering them to really realize what is going and help them. That's what MAPS does really well and that's why I'm like, this is the conference that people need to be at.

Oh, yay. I'm so glad that you said that. It's true, because a lot of these people that might think that they're not good enough might simply need something inside their body shifted so that it can function just a little bit better.

Reframing autism and ADHD care

And I feel like that's how medicine should be, is getting to the root of the why and how can we help you instead of ever making somebody feel their is inept, especially comparative to a sibling or whatnot.

So if you were to say anything to your profession about what we are doing here, what would you suggest to them? I mean, do they pause? Do they reevaluate?

Did they reassess? Because what I hear the most is that people don't learn this in medical school. It's the one thing that historically I have heard most from the physicians that come.

They mentioned that we were never taught this way. And so I don' know if you have a specific field. So I dunno if there's anything that is different that you feel like your profession really needs to know, aside from your cause.

Yeah, well, I would say is It really is an experience of hopefulness when you come here because if you're a

traditionally trained psychiatrist like like I am it's like ADHD is a genetic brain disease you know use the outer all and the riddle and you don't want to zoom its genetic disease it never gonna get better.

Like all of a sudden, when you come here, there's all these tools. And like I was saying before, this is like a grassroots community here. So there are stories from people whose children have completely recovered with these interventions.

Could you imagine being able to help someone with autism or even ADHD turn on a dime within a handful of years and completely just come back to normal?

And so most doctors are here because they really want to help people. They love that feeling. Like yourself. Yeah, yeah. And and so come here and just pick up the toolkit because there's so many tools that you can learn here.

It's just really satisfying to be able to use these things to And so, yeah, that's what I'm saying. I always say my goal as the executive director is to help our physicians learn that they need to every child reach their full potential, and each path is going to be completely different in what that looks like.

Dr. Podesky always says that, you know, when you come here to expand your tools in your toolbox, because we have to keep digging deeper at identifying what we can do to helps somebody reach there full of potential.

Yeah. So what would be, I want to ask you just two last things. First, what was your absolutely favorite lecture? Honestly, for me, like I'll say Dr. New from like, if I'm thinking just like education, his whole framework on like what is autism?

What are all of the different things that make up this illness? So that was the favorite lecture. But the best thing for really has been talking to the people here who have children affected with autism, seeing your son on the panel and Because the impact that that's had on me is not everyone will make a complete 100% recovery, but still within that, it's like you can't give up.

You need to focus on how do we maximize quality of life and how to help them have a life worth living. And it is all of the fundamentals of medicine.

Why MAPS offers a better toolkit

It's get them great food, get the doing meaningful activities, exercising to the extent that they can, have them have these connections and just hearing about the different people here and how they're helping their children and they helping the patients, that really brings it to life in a way.

I could be doing so much more with the patient I'm looking after. And I also feel hopeful when someone comes in the door and their like, I have a child who has profound autism or severe ADHD.

That used to feel like a pit in my stomach. It's like I can't do anything for them. But now it's I've seen all these families do these amazing things, and it's just like, even if we can't get 100% recovery, I at least feel like I can make a huge impact here.

And this is going to be really special for them. So yeah, it is just a much more hopeful. I love that. I really truly hope one day we become the standard of care.

You know, we have like the American Academy of Pediatrics and they do like, the well visits and the sick visits, and that's critical as well. But what we do is so completely different.

We're like anything outside of the norm, let's help you figure it out. And I think to your point, you know last night I met a neurologist that was here for the first time from California.

A lot of people that are here are physicians that had been failed by mainstream medicine. And they find their way to

us because they had to find the answers for their children and then they realized there's so much more that we should be doing.

And then it goes back and infiltrates their community and their practice and all the families that they… It's interesting because a lot are the parents that are leading the way and they're physicians that have experienced exactly what you're saying, the block and not knowing what to do.

And then they come and they learn there's another way, and then it completely transforms the way they approach. Like you just said, with a pit in your stomach, now you have a little bit of hope, like, oh, there are some tools that we can look into that might be able to help you reach a better life.

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I love that. OK, so one last question. Sure. So what would your advice be for anybody who has heard of or not yet heard a MAPS conference about what we do when it comes to medicine?

Go to it. If you're not aware of this, you have the foundations course. It's built for newbies, people who are not familiar with your methodology, and you deliver it in such a succinct and easy way.

Well, it's not easy because it has a lot of information, but it is organized in a nice way to give you a comprehensive understanding. you'll never look at autism, ADHD, the same afterwards.

So just come along and do it. It doesn't take too long and you leave feeling really inspired and hopeful. I love that. You'll be back, right? Oh, yeah.

Okay. All right. Thanks so much for joining us today.