Discover Why Functional Labs Elevate Your Fertility Transcript

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Introduction to Dr. Kela Smith

Hey. Welcome to the Beyond Infertility Summit. Today, we're going to talk to Dr. Kela Smith, who is a Holistic-Integrative Fertility and Hormone Doctor.

She has a Ph. D. in Natural and Holistic Medicine, as well as being Double Board Certification in Natural Medicine and Humanitarian Medicine. She is the creator and founder of The Hormone Puzzle Society and the Fertility Coach University.

You're going to hear such an amazing talk when I interview Dr. Kela about how to approach functional lab testing. What is it? Breaking it down. Kind of getting into the nitty gritty of lab testing and why it's different from what your conventional doctors may have already told you about.

So join us for the talk. Well, see you soon. Hey, Dr. Kela, welcome. Thank you so much for joining me on Beyond Infertility. And I'm excited to talk to you today about functional lab testing and what that means for the fertility journey.

Thank you. I'm excited to be here. Awesome.

What Functional Lab Testing Means

Well, let's dove right in because you're such an expert in this space, of course, of fertility and also like how functional lab testing plays a role in kind of identifying what's happening under the surface.

So let's start with the basics. Like, for those of those of our listeners and participants that maybe don't know or aren't familiar with this term, what does it mean when we say functional lab testing?

Yes. So functional labs are going to be different than bloodwork that you would get at your western medical doctor or clinic, because one Western medicine is looking at different parameters.

Functional labs are looking a little bit deeper. Like you said, they're looking at how can we make the body heal, how can we find the root cause, and how can we fix and optimize?

Whereas bloodwork is looking at just a snapshot in time of what's happening right when whatever is being tested is tested, whether that's hormones or minerals or whatever they're testing.

And those parameters are, do you need a prescription? Do you need to have surgery? Are you a good candidate for an art treatment like, you know, IVF or IUD?

So it's very different parameters. And I'm looking to heal the body and to make it work optimally, whereas, you know, functional or Western medicine, like I just said, is really looking at those different parameters.

Yeah. So essentially like functional being what's happening in the body, what are the things that are interconnected to fertility that are maybe not optimal?

And then Western medicine or the more conventional labs are really looking at snapshots in time around what basic lab work is saying about, for example, in like, should you do IVF, should you do are you kind of answering basic questions?

But they have a different lens that they're looking at it through. Exactly. Exactly. And functional labs as well are looking at optimal levels. I don't want to see just what your baseline is.

I want you to be optimal. So that's it's a different parameter that we're looking at. Even when I do blood work with clients, it's a different parameter that I'm looking at because I'm looking at healing and I'm looking at optimization.

So I'm curious, how often do you retest functional labs? So do you have like a process where they do the lab testing and then they do whatever your your action plan is based on their labs?

And then do they ever, like, have reach a point where you're like, okay, things look better or maybe we should retest this stuff?

How Often to Retest and What to Track

Or so I look and this is another where another place where functional labs are different because I'm also correlating what the lab test says based on what the symptoms are.

So symptom reduction is the number one thing we can say. This is working. Obviously, if you get pregnant and we're working on fertility, that's a telltale sign that what we're doing is working, but also symptom reduction.

Your cycle gets more optimized, it's more regular, it's less symptoms. Maybe you're working on weight loss, you're losing weight, your brain fog or skin issues.

All those have gone away. So that's the first place I look and I say, just like you would do basic bloodwork, I say, at least once a year you want to run some functional labs, especially if you're still having symptoms.

So for me, you know, I'm in perimenopause. I have very little symptoms of that. But once a year I go to my Western doctor, I have bloodwork, I go to my, you know, my functional doc because we can't treat ourselves.

So I have a functional doc to go to her and she runs some hormone tests and some some, you know, basic functional labs. So I would say, to answer your question, I'd say once a year, maybe every two years, depending on what symptoms you have.

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. And in terms of like the information that you're attempting to gather from the functional labs, what do you find is like most like useful as far as information go?

And then which are your favorite tests for fertility or so? I love to run the Dutch test for hormone testing and I actually did the one from Meridian Valley Labs because I feel like they give a little bit easier to read more parameters.

But when I run that test, I'm looking for not just what the hormone levels are, but how the body's actually using the hormones, how they're being methylated, which means neutralized, how they're detoxing and excreting.

This is especially important for estrogen because I want to see is the estrogen being recirculated back into the body and that's causing issues. Is the testosterone too high and is it higher than the estrogen, meaning that's going to affect ovulation and egg health?

I also like to look at the stress hormone profile.

Favorite Fertility Lab Tests

So I'm looking at cortisol, cortisone creatinine, adrenal gland reserve to see if this person's in fight or flight and to see if their body is not going to accept a pregnancy because their their stress hormones are super high or super low.

They're in fatigue and burnout stage. So that's kind of the first thing I'm looking at. And I'm I also yeah, I also love to look at the thyroid through urine because it's just a different lens to look at the thyroid through.

We'll look at 23 and see if anything's going on there and so the Dutch test is one of my favorites and I also like doing the microbiome analysis through Biomarker X and I do that test particularly because unlike some other tests such as GI Map and you know, different stool tests, they're looking at what microbiome is there, but the biome effects is looking at how it's interacting with each other.

It's looking at the whole picture, the colony that's in the gut to say, okay, are there opportunistic bacteria in here? That's causing the bad guys to overrun the good guys?

And how are they? How is the relationship with all the microbiome and what is it doing and what is it doing for symptoms? I can also tell if a client is super inflamed by looking at that and looking at what their microbiome is saying.

And as we know, an inflamed body cannot get pregnant or is very is a lot more difficult because it sees it's a stressor, it's like a fight or flight. So the body's not going to get pregnant in an environment like that.

So that's kind of the second test I like to do. And then the third thing I usually will do is a mineral analysis. Most people are mineral deficient. They don't realize they are lots of people have toxic heavy metals.

They don't realize they have that. And I like to test minerals through tissue versus blood because again, blood is just a snapshot. It's a transportation mechanism and it doesn't show minerals that are intracellular, meaning they're inside the cells.

An example of that would be magnesium. And magnesium is in the cell. So if you test it through blood, you're not getting a good representation of what the level actually is.

So those are kind of my three go to tests and and kind of how I read them functionally to say, okay, these are the root causes that I see. That's probably what's causing these infertility issues, especially, or even if I'm testing somebody that's in perimenopause or menopause, this is what's driving that.

And this is what we need to do to fix and optimize. Yeah. Yeah. And the the mineral analysis you like through hair, which tissue. I like to do. Yep. The hair tissue, mineral analysis.

Yeah. So hair. Yeah. Yeah. Because it's the most and it's noninvasive, it's pretty easy for somebody to grab some hair versus, you know, if we were to test, you know, tissue, take a biopsy, if you will, that's not really an easy thing to do.

So hair for sure. Yeah. Okay. And so why is it that these all sound like great tests? So how come irregular western medicine practitioners or reproductive endocrinologist?

Why aren't they doing these tests? Yeah. So what I said earlier, those practitioners are great. They have their wheelhouse of education. But one, they're not looking to heal the body, they're not looking to make the body optimal.

They're looking at what are the parameters for IVF. I apply for a prescription and for, you know, if you're in menopause, a hysterectomy, that's what they're looking for.

And bloodwork is cheap and easy and it can tell them that. It can tell them a baseline. It's not going to show true healing. And so that's why I think a lot of Western medicine doesn't use these tests when they're not trained in this way, they're not trained functionally and then healing the body.

But then also these, you know, the blood works cheap and easy and that's what they they've been taught and that's what they, you know, kind of know how to do.

So. So that's the reason. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. It's unfortunate. And I feel like I don't know if you're this a lot, but I often get this message of like, but my, my doctor already tested all the things they did all the lab tests.

And I'm like, that would be a it would be thousands and thousands of dollars, but B, it would literally be so much information that it would be overwhelming for any person to have that many lab tests like they know doctor is testing every single test under the sun.

Like if they're a proficient doctor, they're probably picking and choosing what the right ones are for you and what's happening for you.

Why Conventional Doctors Use Different Labs

Yes, I hear the same thing. And I just have to reiterate what I just said that, you know, as a functional medicine doctor, you know, we all practice different, but as a functional doctor, we're going to practice different than a Western doctor.

So it just depends on, you know, and that's the thing too. I have a lot of clients come to me and they've been with their Western doctors and they've run all the tests and everything's normal and they're still not pregnant.

And then they've got the, you know, the title or the diagnosis of unexplained infertility. And then I have to remind them that that just means that doctor hasn't found what's wrong yet, and we need to dove deeper.

And that's what we do functional. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I agree so much with that approach of like, we just need to figure out what's going on. And I think you call this the hormone puzzle.

Can you share a little bit more about what that is for you or so? The hormone puzzle is a protocol that I developed when I was struggling with my own hormone or my own fertility and hormone issues.

And the reason I did this is because I felt very out of control when this was happening. I felt like a lot of things were being done to me, and I'm a Type A personality.

I wanted to take back some control, so I said, What can I do? What do I have in my control on a daily basis? And that was the fundamental pieces of what the hormone puzzle is today.

So I'll go through it briefly and then we can discuss further if you want to dove in deeper. But so this is puzzles, an acronym because I think acronyms are fun in their early easy to understand so PE proper whole food nutrition you understanding supplements Z zapping stress z or z's sleep l is love and encouragement E is exercise and environment.

So those are all the pieces that I focus on daily to optimize my fertility and my hormones naturally. And this is what I teach my clients how to do as well.

And so that's awesome. I will I want to dove a little bit deeper into this. Like you're saying that you were going through your own journey and you were like doing this for yourself.

You came in with a background in this, right? Like, I feel like a lot of women are out there trying to figure it all out for themselves because they too are type A's, but their profession might be something completely different and they're like, Oh, I'm just going to like Google all this stuff and try to put these pieces together.

So I just want to make sure that we like highlight that you were coming in with like a breadth of knowledge that allowed you to, like, break this down for yourself.

Yes.

The Hormone Puzzle Method

So I did come in as a personal trainer for ten years, so I knew health and wellness, but I did not know fertility as much as I do today, seven years later.

So I dove into research. I did not recommend you do that because it took me so many hours and so much frustration and not knowing if I was doing it right.

So now I figured it out for you. So I would recommend you work with a practitioner like me. Are you two? We figured it out and we can show you the way, right?

Yeah. And it's just like it's it. I find it like so many times people are like, oh my God, I'm spending like every waking hour doing all of this research.

And they will literally bring in, like the binders of research papers that they read through. And I'm like, This is great, thank you. But yes, I read all of those papers and I still think that we need to be using.

So I just feel like when if you're not in the health and wellness field, you're not necessarily a practitioner or a clinician. You got used to like parsing through all of this and making sense of it in the context of what's going on for your body.

Exactly. Exactly. And another piece of that, too, is, you know, I've been practicing, like I said, for seven years. So I've seen so many cases and I've seen the patterns and I've seen the profiles.

And I can look at it a case and say, I've seen this before. I know what to do here. Whereas you as a layperson, even though you're Googling and researching and maybe you're reading some of the same stuff that I've read, you haven't you don't have the experience that you and I had that we've seen these cases and we know what to do.

So yeah, I definitely agree with you there. Yeah, yeah. I just wanted to make sure that those are like, not like, oh, great. Like, I mean, you can figure out the best, the best, supplements, the best, whatever, like, oh, God.

And you're going to end up on a bag full of supplements, right? Yeah. When I was working. Right. Exactly. I know. And I had a client say to me recently too, she said, one thing I liked about working with you is that you helped me weed through all the noise because I thought I was doing all the things.

But you came in, you were like, No, this is what you need to focus on. And kind of you guided me through that. And so she was so appreciative of that.

Absolutely. And that support is so valuable. Like we are not even and you said this earlier, like you have your own functional doctor. I have my own practitioner.

Like I don't think anyone should have to pass this out themselves for whatever is in our bodies because having a third person or like I guess it's a third person, second person, someone who's observing what is happening and reflecting back to you.

Oh, so when you do this, you feel like this and, and like the ahas and the transformation is happening in that like connection. And someone reflecting back to you what it is that's going on and what it might be connected to.

And I have those ahas all the time with my practitioner name. And to another point to make on that is when you're in it, it's hard to see. It's like seeing if you're standing this close to the mirror, you're not going to see yourself if you're in it.

You can't see what somebody from the outside can see looking in. So yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So that's true.

Supplements and Foundational Fertility Support

Let's talk a little bit about supplements because I know that people go down this rabbit hole a lot. I'm curious if you have top supplements for each of the functional tests that you do or if you have top supplements just in general for fertility, where where can people get started with understanding your story?

So before I get into supplements, I always like to say this talk to your doctor, your practitioner. You know, you and I are both doctors, but we're not the person listening doctor probably.

So let's talk to your doctor before you add a supplement or change anything with what you're taking. But that being said, I really love the functional labs because they give me an idea of how we can customize your supplements based on what your labs say.

So you're going to have a bio individual supplement regimen based on your hard core data. So that's super important. But for those of you who are listening, who maybe you can't afford to do labs yet, you haven't gotten to that point yet.

I feel like there's a core really three supplements that I think everybody should be taking no matter what your health condition, definitely for fertility.

But really any hormones or just overall wellness. So the first one would be a whole food, prenatal or multivitamin, something that has good quality ingredients.

And then that's easy to take. That's going to fill in the gaps of your, you know, your Whole Foods diet. I want you to start with diet. This is going to supplement that.

So the second one would be a good quality probiotic. I feel like pretty much everybody needs a probiotic. I recommend spore based because they're going to make it through the stomach acid and get into the intestines where they need to do their work.

You don't have to do a probiotic forever. Once you kind of repopulate that area, you can go down to maintenance dosing. So tell people really good probiotics are pretty expensive, but you don't have to take, you know, 1 to 2 a day for the rest of your life.

You can maintenance dose it. So definitely the probiotics. Probiotics are also good if you're not eating a lot of fiber on a regular basis and you're not getting a good variety of different fibers for us S. O. S., X, O's, all these different chains of fibers.

If you're not doing that, I would say a prebiotic is important. That's the fiber that's going to feed the probiotics so they can reproduce. And then the last I say is a fish oil.

If you're not eating fish a couple of times a week, a good fatty, wild caught fish, then you need to supplement these fish oils, EPA and DHEA, because they're going to help your body with inflammation.

They're going to give your body the fats that they need to build. You know, that's the building block for hormones. So it's going to be really important that you have a good quality fish oil in your supplement regimen.

And then other than that, based on what you're struggling with, if you have a diagnosis, you know, there's certain ones for PCOS, for Endo, if you're trying to do egg health, sperm health, there's all different supplements based on that.

But that would all be individualized based on what your diagnosis is, if you have one. And again, that's why it's important to work with a practitioner to run some labs at that venture budget and to go from there.

Yeah, okay. Yeah. I love it. I agree with the caller. I think that prenatal fish oil and a probiotic sounds like a really good starting point for most people.

Until you have more information and what I appreciate about what you just said is just like it's really easy, especially with fertility. Like there's so much information on the interweb or Instagram wherever you get your information and everybody is talking about the latest and greatest supplement.

And even I feel like a lot of reproductive endocrinologist now have taken on the supplement trend. But oh, generalized, right. Like there's a doctor in the Bay Area that I know really well who I love.

And he sends a lot of referrals, so I'm not badmouthing, but all of his patients come in with a laundry list of supplements, and the ones that end up working with me are like, Well, which one should I take out? And they all right, like, you don't need a whole laundry list of things that are.

And I would say too, I have people that come to me and I'm sure you do too, where they're asking me about supplements. And then I say, Well, what are you eating? What's your diet look like?

And it's terrible. And I'm like, Okay, we have to get your diet right first before we can supplement. We have to have whole food nutrition. And I'm not saying you can never have a treat or never have anything that you love.

That's maybe not 100% good for you, but it's what you do day by day and what you do on a regular basis that's going to be the foundation. So get that where we need it first and then do the supplements.

However, I say to like our, our entire program is all Taipei's. No, oh yeah. Like, I don't need you to do this 120%, which is what you think 100% looks like.

Advocating for Yourself and Next Steps

I need you to do it 85 to 90%. And then what? You want me to put my tendon severe? Like we need to do 85 to 90%. It will be good, right? I know. I always say 80 to 90% clean whole food, 20% food for the soul.

So have that yummy thing that you love because it's going to it's you know, it's going to lower your stress and give you some joy. So do it. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Are there other tips that you would like to share around lab tests and advocating for themselves? And like, how do how do people, like, start on this journey of like, I want to find answers and I want to go beyond unexplained infertility and really understand, like, why is this happening and what can I do about it?

So or so I would say, find a practitioner like you or I and get some functional lab test. Run the three that I mentioned or the ones that work for me.

And I'm sure you have your favorite tests as well. So find a practitioner that you connect with and do some research and see what tests they recommend for you.

And then once we get those tests, then we can dove into a more bio specific or bio individual protocol. If you can't afford the testing yet, then start with the basics of the hormone puzzle.

Make sure your diet is on point 80 to 90%. Make sure your hydration and we didn't even talk about this. That hydration is a huge piece of this puzzle.

Make sure you're drinking enough water, you're getting enough electrolytes. I feel like this one has missed a lot. So you want your urine to be pale yellow?

If it's not, you need electrolytes. That's too dark. You need more water. If it's too light, you need electrolytes. So make sure your hydration is on point.

Then the other pieces. I also would recommend, you know, making sure that your stress you have a stress management plan. We all have stress. We can avoid it.

But if you have a plan to manage it and to put in put some boundaries in place around that, I feel like that is a really important piece. Do some things to feed your soul.

Like I said earlier, this can be non-food as well. So this can be, you know, taking a walk outside with your bare feet, petting your dog, reading a book, going to the beach, you know, something that you love to do that will bring you joy.

And so getting those foundational pieces in place, I feel like, is super important.

Where to Find Dr. Kela

And then if you if it's in your budget to run the tests, get some testing done and dove in deeper into, you know, what is your hormone puzzle and how are we going to put it back together?

Absolutely. I love it so much. This is so awesome. Where people find you, where should they find you and connect. Source on my website is the best place and I am at coachkela.com.

And there you can find a lot of educational information all around fertility hormones, even some stuff on men's health. You can grab one of my freebies and we'll have a free link or a specific link for this Summit.

But we are doing a cycle optimizing quick start guide that is meant to help you optimize your cycle so that you can get pregnant. So you can find that on my website as well.

There will be a link in the show notes, I'm sure. And then I'm also on Instagram. That's probably my favorite social media place to hang out at. @kela_healthcoach and @hormonepuzzlemethod and then Facebook is Kela Health Coach.

I also have a podcast, The Hormone P. U. Z. Z. L. E Podcast, and then I also have a second piece of my business. If you're a practitioner listening to this and you want to dove into fertility coaching, you can go to fertilitycoachuniversity.com and learn more about our certification program.

So yeah. Awesome. Well, thank you so much today. For those of you listening in, thanks for joining us and we look forward to seeing you really soon. On the next episode of Beyond Infertility Summit.