Does Mast Cell Activation Syndrome Interfere With Your Gut? Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Mast Cell Activation

Welcome back to another interview. We are continuing our discussion of Reversing Chronic Gut Conditions. I'm your host, Sinclair Kennally, and I am joined by the wonderful and the dedicated Dr. Kelly McCann.

And she is an expert on mast cell activation syndrome. And we're going to unpack what that means today, how it might be actually impacting you, whether or not you're aware of it, and the differences between that and histamine sensitivity and why this is proliferating right now.

So it's not just increasing awareness, things to Dr. Kelly's tireless advocation efforts as well as a few other wonderful folks at the space. And let's talk about it.

Let's let's unpack all of this. I really want to duck here for you guys today, because I think Mast Cell is really poorly understood in the role of gut health right now, especially, you know, this current like gut condition cases that just don't seem to be fixed with these quick cleanses.

So welcome, Dr. Kelly. We're glad you're here. Thank you, Sinclair. So nice to be here. So talk to us a little bit about your work and how you got obsessed with Mast Cell and what does this mean for you and your practice know?

Why is this such a focus for you? Well, my practice is really medical mysteries and trying to figure out what's going on with people. And most of my patients tend to have nasal symptoms, although I didn't really realize that right away.

I was looking at mold and chronic Lyme disease and other chronic infections, as well as environmental toxicants. And we now understand that people who have these issues, often some percentage of them, and in my practice, a very large percentage of them, these things trigger the condition of hypersensitivity and inflammation that we call mass activation syndrome.

And so that was why I had to get into my cell, because everyone was walking in with it. And and even patients who had been patients for a long time, who just couldn't seem to be get you know, they just weren't getting any better.

Looking through the eyes of Mast Cell activation, all of a sudden the light bulbs are going off for myself, the patients, and, and we're gaining traction and getting them better.

So for me, it was helping them. And then simultaneously I've had my own kind of health journey because I've been exposed to mold.

Symptoms Across Multiple Body Systems

I have Lyme disease and Bartonella and and everybody has environmental toxins. So, you know, that plays a role, too, and started having a lot of reactions, itchy skin, lots of food sensitivities.

And so, you know, I have my own story of of a health journey with these kinds of conditions. And I think sometimes I mean, it's it's hard to go through.

Right. But I'm so grateful for my chronic illness journey now and how much suffering and struggle there was because I've got this empathy for what our clients, students are going through and I'm so much more committed to finding those nuanced strategies for them.

So I'm so thrilled to to share your story today because it's such a great example of turning your message into your

message or your painting. Assam Yeah. Thank you. Yeah.

Okay, cool. So you mentioned how this can be some of the symptoms can be misunderstood, that Mast Cell Dysregulation and Mast Cell Activation Syndrome.

Can you share just here at the top, what kind of symptoms should people be looking for? Sure. The definition really in my mind is multiple symptoms and multiple systems of a body.

And so it's not just about somebody with allergies or somebody with skin issues. It's going to be somebody who has allergies and skin issues. And, you know, for our purposes today, gastrointestinal issues and maybe cardiac issues, chronic pain, chronic fatigue, intestinal I'm sorry, interstitial cystitis or bladder issues, difficult periods or endometriosis, kind of any system in the body.

If you have multiple systems involved that are inflammatory or allergic or hypersensitive in its its presentation, you really have to start thinking about Mast Cell activation.

Mm hmm. That's really well said. Okay, so if we slow down here, it seems like a good spot to really define what Mast Cell activation syndrome is, because we all have Mast Cells.

Yes, yes. So we all have Mast Cells. We love our Mast Cells they They love us. And their job is to protect us from foreign invaders. And so they are born in the bone marrow.

Are you know, related to our red and our white blood cells are born in our bone marrow, and they travel to the periphery and they line the areas of interface between ourselves and the outside world.

So they're in our skin, they're in our respiratory tract, they're in our entire GI tract from the mouth all the way down there in our lungs. And they have a really high affinity for our nervous system, our vascular system.

We have Mast Cells in the brain and they are constantly looking for foreign invaders. And when they perceive something that is a foreign invader or a threat, they release their inflammatory mediators.

We call these cytokines or chemokines. We you know, we now know that term cytokine, right. That's that's a chemical messenger of inflamed Asian things like histamine and serotonin, heparin.

These things can be released. And then it sends signals to the rest of the body that there's danger or there's a problem and you get an inflammatory reaction.

So specifically about, you know, gut related issues, folks who have been struggling with these chronic conditions for quite some time, whether it's, you know, attributed to autoimmune disease or attributed to food sensitivities and intolerances and allergies or whatever, people are assuming the root causes.

How would they know with Mast Cell Activation Syndrome is playing a role for them? Good question. If you have gastrointestinal issues and you can have symptoms, any any sort of GI symptom will qualify you.

Right. Which is why you're watching this summit. So gas bloating, diarrhea, constipation, heartburn, anything like that. An autoimmune condition in the gastrointestinal system qualifies too.

But the idea is think about all the rest of your systems.

What Mast Cells Do and How They React

Do you also have fatigue, mood issues, other allergy type symptoms in the respiratory tract? Upper respiratory? Do you have cardiac symptoms, palpitations, chest pain?

Do you have autonomic nervous system problems? These might be you feel dizzy and lightheaded when you stand

up because your heart rate is shooting up or your blood pressure is dropping.

Do you have bladder issues where you have urinary frequency, urinary urgency, urinary incontinence, or have you been diagnosed with frequent recurrent urinary tract infections or interstitial cystitis?

For the women listening, you know, that might be terrible periods, very painful periods, heavy bleeding endometriosis for men that might be a prostatitis or pelvic floor dysfunction.

And then there's a whole host of other potential symptoms in the general urinary tract. But, you know, we see a lot of bone pain. We'll see a lot of joint pain, nerve pain, tingling, neuropathy type symptoms.

And these can all be associated with nasal activation now. And and so for those listeners out there, it's really how many other systems are impacted in nearby besides your gastrointestinal system.

If you've got one, maybe you don't have nasal. If you have three or four or five, six, you know, you check in all the boxes. When you go to the doctor's office on the review systems, then it's highly likely that you could be dealing with Mast Cell activation.

This is so interesting because back when I was struggling with my health, I certainly fit the bill, as you describe it today. But because I didn't have the histamine stuff, I didn't have sinus stuff, I didn't have flushing when I ate and all these other symptoms, you know, we never thought of that as a part of my picture, whereas my goal was the very typical histamine intolerance, allergies up here, immediate skin issues from, you know, different foods that were improperly selected or repaired.

So we were dealing with it for for him and never thought about it. And I was like, Oh, all my symptoms are just basically. Lyme and Mold. So, yeah. Right.

So and, and so yeah. You're you guys are a classic example of the the picture that we think of. And then you probably had Mast Cell activation too. It just presented differently.

So you don't have to have allergies, you don't have to have histamine issues. And that is dependent upon, you know, the makeup of the mast cells themselves.

So if if you have different inflammatory mediators that are getting released by the muscles and we don't necessarily know all of these details and the mast cells can differ from person to person and place in your body.

So it makes it very complicated. That's one of the challenges with this is that it it looks like everything in anything you know. So so that's one of the really big challenges.

Histamine Intolerance vs Food Sensitivities

But I find that, you know, when people are sensitive and you're doing all the things for the other conditions that you have and you're not making much progress or you can't tolerate the treatments, oftentimes that's it.

That's a situation where we're dealing with mass activation. So you've touched on a couple of words that I really want to unpack with the audience here.

So before we dig further specifically into mass sorry I mentioned histamine intolerance and food sensitivities and allergies. How how can people understand the difference and how should they be thinking about this in a useful way?

So histamine intolerance is really when your body doesn't make enough enzymes that break down histamine. So, you know, people have heard of lactose intolerance, right?

So lactose intolerance is where you don't make enough of the lactase to break down the lactose. And so you can

take an enzyme, you can drink milk that doesn't have it.

You know, there's there's things to do. So with histamine intolerance, it's really just that. And you can have a lot of symptoms with histamine intolerance because there could be an overabundance of histamine and your your poor little DAO enzymes that break down histamine just aren't capable of keeping up with the demand.

Or it could be that you're really deficient. So that's histamine intolerance and most of the symptoms are going to be focused in the GI tract, but you can have some mild systemic symptoms as well, and you can have histamine intolerance and muscle activation too.

You can have them both simultaneously for food sensitivities and food allergies. The the definition for food allergy is it has to be mediated by a protein in your immune system called IGT.

And these are the these are the immunoglobulins that a tradition allergist will be able to identify on a blood test or with skin, you know, patch testing and say, okay, you have an allergy.

And typically those are thought to be more concerning. People can have anaphylaxis and swelling and die from an allergy, but food sensitivities are mediated by different things and the immune system could be IGT, could be some other things can be white blood cells, but it's it's not typically as life threatening, but it can be life altering for sure.

Right. And so, I mean, I can go on, but go ahead. Please do. Yeah. This is so to make these distinctions, everybody talks around them as if as if the audience already understands them.

So let's slow down and really cover this. Sure. So most people who have food reactions, they're going to be food sensitivities. Right. You can also have food intolerances and that would be probably, again, with like inability to break down dairy.

That would be a dairy intolerance because of a lack of an enzyme. You can have celiac disease, which is an autoimmune condition, but the vast majority of people are going to have food sensitivities.

And this is, you know, part of the immune system that is saying this thing is not good for you and it can cause a whole host of symptoms. You can have skin symptoms, you can have a drippy watery nose or itchy eyes even though you're eating a food.

Right. It doesn't make a lot of sense that you're having those symptoms, but they are food related. Some people get headaches and migraines from food sensitivities.

Joint pain, bone, bone pain, muscle pain, fatigue. I've had patients who, you know, they'll eat a food that they're sensitive to. They'll get all sorts of gastrointestinal symptoms as well as some of these other symptoms.

So food sensitivities can really disrupt, not destroy is a strong word. Really make your life pretty miserable, right. If you can't figure that out. So and that's really where we start with most patients is the thing that you have the most control over is what you put in your mouth.

And so we need to clean up the diet. We need to identify those foods that you're sensitive to and pull them out of the diet. So you can see that over the course of the couple of weeks of being on elimination diet, it tremendously helps add those foods back.

You feel like you got hit by a bus. You know what your your problems are. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. This is so important because the bio individuality is very real.

Right? And it's like in our courses, we're working with people who have chronic conditions. And it's really important to understand you cannot poke the bruise you're trying to heal over and over again.

All day long and expect great results. So some investigation that's required. Right? Some sacrifice and some

investigation if you want to get better. Yeah, exactly. So one of the things that I really want to give you time to talk about today is eating in that low histamine diet way and what can that do for Marcus?

And, you know, what are the limitations of it? Right. And then we could talk about some other methods to help support people through this process. Sure.

So there are some foods that are generally high in histamine. Things like beef and avocados. Oftentimes citrus tomatoes. Those are very high in histamine.

Low Histamine Diet and Food Triggers

And in some patients who have histamine intolerance and nasal activation, those foods can make them feel worse. It can exacerbate all of their symptoms.

And so they get benefit. They may find or you may find you get benefit if you put yourself on a low histamine diet. And so I do recommend that my patients who have nasal activation, especially if they have, you know, GI symptoms, allergy type symptoms to put themselves in a low histamine diet.

But even if you don't have those as your primary symptoms of meso, it still may be very valuable because we want to lower the reactivity of the mast cells across the board.

And so trying to do a low histamine diet is is worth it because you could improve your symptoms, you know, 20, 40, 60%. And that's huge when you've been struggling for a long time.

Yeah. Really important. And part of the part of the other things about a low histamine diet, just to give a few more ideas, vinegars caused problems, aged foods cause problems.

So the longer a food has been around, the more bacteria are able to grow and the more histamine is in that food. And so generally you want to avoid leftovers.

They can be very problematic for people. And then on the flip side too, I have patients with nasal activation who get no benefit whatsoever from eating a low histamine diet.

So we do it as a trial because I'm never going to know who will benefit and who won't. Right. You kind of have to go through that process and it can be very telling.

Okay. That's super helpful to understand. So one of the things that I also want to give you a chance to talk about today is, you know, some supplements and some natural health methods can that can help people who are working with mucus and working through it.

And it's really tempting to go right to those solutions, but I think that it would be really beneficial if we talk first about and cast from the perspective of like.

What's causing it. Yeah, this this phenomenon I'm seeing persist in gut health conversations is very frustrating. And I understand why people aren't getting well.

They're talking about Sebo leaky gut and casts and a number of conditions as if those are the root cause when nothing could be further from the truth.

Right? Right. So yes, it's important to understand what you're working with and what it has developed into if you can, you know, attach a nice accurate label to it.

But that's not the destination, right? And managing that label is not the destination because it's not actually the root cause. So I would love to give you a chance to rest a little bit about and cast today.

And let's start by talking about the root causes that you see really prevalent for MSL Activation Syndrome. Absolutely. Thanks for asking. And massage activation genetically is supposed to be present and 17% of the population, let's say roughly 20%, one in five. Right.

So that means one in five people have a genetic predisposition to develop nasal activation syndrome.

Root Causes: Mold, Infections, and EMF

I'm one of them. Right. And that doesn't mean that your genetics or your destiny, just like when we're talking about autoimmune conditions being triggered by something massive activation syndrome is triggered by something.

And typically for those people who have mass. So you can go back in your history and you can look at how maybe you were an allergic kid, maybe you had eczema, and then you can look at the progression of how your symptoms have increased over time and be able to say, well, hmm, we moved into this house and I think there was mold there and you know, I developed asthma and GI issues and then we moved into this other house that had a lot of air pollution because it was right next to a busy highway and I developed even more symptoms.

The truth is, you know, we live on a planet that's really toxic and it's only getting more and more toxic. And so some of the biggest drivers of cars are environmental chemicals, you know, toxins.

And we can talk ad nauseum about that. Mold exposure is huge. It's one of the biggest drivers, in my experience of nasal activation syndrome and SIBO and leaky gut and all of these GI issues.

Right? So if you're not getting better in a certain situation and you're doing all the things and you're taking all the supplements and you're doing all the detox and you're not getting better, you are likely living or being exposed to mold in your environment.

And you really, really need to investigate that. Yes. Hallelujah. Amen. Thank you. You're welcome. The other thing, too, is many times people can be in a moldy house and maybe you had Lyme disease or a tick bite when you were younger and you were fine when you were younger.

But because mold causes suppression of your immune system, now your immune system can't keep the chronic infections that have been previously dormant and dealt with in your body.

Now they come to life and so you have even more symptoms. I see this very commonly and and not only that, there are many other vectors and the the expansion of the tick population is also growing because of global warming, etc..

You know, there are more ticks and more places that people can get infected by things like Lyme disease, and they may not even know it because some of these ticks are so small.

So that complicates many of your GI symptoms as well. So we've got toxins, we've got mold, we've got chronic infections. And then, you know, I have to say, MF is another huge trigger for mass activation and for chronic health issues too.

And it may not be the primary trigger, but it's not helping. And we are we are bathing in EMF on a regular basis, especially now that we're doing so much, you know, electronically and over the Internet.

It's beautiful way to connect, but it also means that we're really inundated with EMF. So those are my four top things that tend to trigger mass activation and they really need to be investigated and it takes work both on the part of your practitioner and yourself to identify what are the things that are driving your symptoms simultaneously while you're trying to calm down all the symptoms.

That's a really beautiful recap of what we're seeing and that why we're seeing such a rise in mass health issues. Right. Yes. When we're talking about EMF guys, just to sort of an impact that a little bit we're not just talking about

wireless radiation.

Well, we're talking about dirty electricity. So wireless radiation is your wife very router you smart devices. We're also talking what does electricity the noise on the wires we're talking about, you know, the electromagnetic fields that are coming off of your circuits.

And so this is so and of course, lighting. So it's it's a big umbrella term. Don't just think about cell phone hygiene, which is great, but you might still be, you know, getting advice.

Yeah. And having people who can come out to the house and evaluate your house. I found in my house it was really the electrical frequencies so that the electrical in the walls behind the bed that were causing the biggest problem for having a a sanctuary bedroom.

Right. It wasn't that it wasn't the Wi-Fi, it wasn't the router, it was the electrical. And then for some people, it's actually the magnetic and the magnetic is one that's virtually impossible to do anything about because it's it's related to how the the water lines and the electrical lines are coming in from the street.

And so I have a I have a patient, actually, a whole family who live with the magnetic is so high in their front bedrooms that they really they really need to leave.

They really need to move out of that house because you can't remediate that. Right. And this is so important because so much about EMF mitigation is simple or free and these are about daily habits.

And then a lot of it is actually structural issues and you need to know the difference. Right. So interesting. I know we get we get people with serious mental issues in our practice.

And the minute they and we actually require every client to do EMF mitigation for this reason because you guys can take all the supplements you want in the world.

So, you know, you've already figured out your you wouldn't be at the summit, that, you know, probiotics ain't going to do it for you. So let's look at the other layers.

Right? Right. Absolutely. So interesting. Yeah. There's a lot of alignment here. Okay. So let's talk about some of your favorites lifestyle, natural health and mind body options.

If you if you're recognizing yourself in that Dr. Kelly is sharing, you know, let's let's look at what next steps you can take. So I think about Mast Cell activation as a three legged stool or I should say a three legged stool is how we need to approach treatment for Mast Cell activation.

So we've got your immune system, your muscles, which are hypersensitive and going rogue, and we need to dampen them down. And I'll come back to that. And then you've got your autonomic nervous system, which is heightened, stuck and sympathetic fight or flight or freeze that you absolutely must address.

And then you have your limbic system, which is the ancient part of the brain where we process our emotions. And that part of your body, your brain perceives that you are not safe.

Treatment Approach: Nervous System and Supplements

And so that absolutely must be dealt with. And for a lot of my supersensitive patients, they have to do deal with that part first and the vagus nerve part before you can even start adding in supplements and trying to dampen things down.

So in terms of my favorites, you know, it's really about what's going to work for each individual person. And so I recommend each person look at what are the different options out there.

So there's the Gupta program, there's DNRS. with any hopper, there's primal trust with Kathleen King. There's so many other limbic system retraining programs out there.

Pick the one that resonates with you. If you think the British accents are sexy, maybe Gupta is for you. Right? But you know, other people resonate better with Annie Hopper.

Whichever way you decide to go, you have to commit to that. You know, it's like you can't just watch the videos and think it's going to happen. This is all hands on deck.

You're 100%, 150% in changing the way that your brain is functioning. And the people who commit to that, who see this as a lifestyle, as a, you know, ideally spiritual practice, those are the people who are going to get better.

Now, I'm not saying that Gupta is a like spiritual practice, but the whole idea of changing the way you relate to yourself in the way that you relate to your body and your life has to change.

Yeah, that's it. Thank you. Thank you. And then the same thing, too, with the vagus nerve stuff. So there's, you know, meditation, neurofeedback, you've got so many different devices.

Pick the thing that's going to resonate for you. If you like sound and sound healing, then do the sensei, you know, a sound listening program that might be the thing that is best for you.

So pick your tools and use them. And then in terms of supplements and medications, there's no way one right way. Again, it's really individualized and personalized.

And I don't have the answer. Sinclair doesn't have the answer or you have to go through and you have to try them, because some people respond fantastically to, you know, over-the-counter antihistamines and I have patients try them all and you have to walk through each one because one is going to be magic and one is not going to help at all.

I'll use H2 blockers and there's only one on the market right now. Pepcid, but not often can be a game changer for people. And I know we're in the house space and we like to do natural medicine, but sometimes they really work.

And I wouldn't dismiss pharmaceuticals simply because you want to do everything natural. It may be the ticket that really makes a difference for you. So and then there are tons of supplements.

When I was preparing for my Mast Cells Up summit, I found literature for 65 different supplements. So there's no shortage of things to try. And what are the few, the ones that your your patients end up relying on?

You know, Quercetin is probably the one that's on everybody's list, right? Quercetin works fabulously. There's literature to support that. It's even better than Crumlin.

So I love Quercetin you. There are a couple that, you know, maybe get less press that I really have found very helpful technology and all is one of them.

Technology and all is French marine bark and and so and you know it's got some amazing literature for all different sorts of things, including hair growth.

So hey, why not? So I love technology now. I love parilla seed, perilla seed. I use pyramid from metagenomics. I find that that one's really great for people who are more sensitive, who can't do the Quercetin I love turmeric, of course.

Turmeric has wonderful plethora of literature for so many different reasons. I like resveratrol a lot too. Resveratrol can be very helpful for Mast Cell activation.

It. Yeah, it's got so many other benefits too. PEA can be utilized for pain and for Mast Cell activation and coming

down that histamine luteal and is another one that has good transference across the blood brain barrier.

And some can be used for a lot of neurological things. Let's see, try. Them with that. Good one. I'm sorry. That's a good one. I forgot about that one.

Yeah. I love Luteal and there's Boswell. Yeah, Bromelain. There are no histamine, probiotics, and there's so many things out there. So true. But I hope that people are hearing in this interview is that this could be a part of their picture in a way that they had previously dismissed, especially if they don't have the classic is to be in presentation, or even if you do that, more of your symptoms may have a relationship to, you know, your messed up behavior than you had previously understood.

And that requires a multilayered approach. Once this has developed into understand your root causes and learn and work with somebody or work with a program that really understands it, helps you how to chip away at those in a way that's right for you while you do symptom management, because you could spend your whole life treading water, trying to keep your head above water with the stuff.

And you know, my hope for you and I know for Dr. Kelly as well, her work is that you really take your health into your own hands, see how far you can get.

Absolutely. And there's there's always hope. There's always an ability to get better no matter where you are. I've seen people who are absolutely debilitated really come back and get their lives back.

And it's such an amazing joy to be part of that. So beautifully said. So that's that speaking to the magnificent, you know, health advocates for themselves in the audience, this is such an important area of medicine that is poorly understood.

Practitioner Resources and Where to Find Dr. McCann

I would love to give you a chance to end this interview by speaking directly to the practitioners in the audience. What would you like them to know or what do you want them to do?

So for those practitioners in the audience who are listening, there are so many resources for you to take your ability to help people to the next level.

I AM on the board of two professional organizations, the American Academy of Environmental Medicine, which is one of the oldest professional academies around, and it offers a wealth of educational opportunity, teaching things like low dose allergy therapy, which is a form of immunotherapy that is transformative and so, so simple to learn and implement for patients who have a sensitivities and allergies, I highly, highly recommend that training.

We were having a conference in the fall in San Antonio. For those of you who are interested, the other organization that I'm on the board of is the International Society for Environmentally Acquired Illness, or I see, I mean, again, another fantastic relatively new organization and were really in my mind at the forefront of teaching practitioners how to think about complex chronic illness.

It's, it's mold, it's environmental toxins, it's chronic infections. And how do we start to wrap our heads around all of these things that are happening with patients and teaching you practitioners how to navigate and help these patients along?

Thank you for your advocacy, your dedication to spreading the word. It's so inspiring. Dr. Kelly And I hope that everybody listening today has gotten I mean, there's just so many gems and because I know everybody got something out of this.

So yes, I hope so, too. Thank you so much for spending time with me. You're welcome. Working people find you in your work. I have a brick and mortar practice in Southern California so you can find me at thespringcenter.com.

You have to put the dot in front of it and also drkellymccann.com that's my online business you can find blogs there and I will be by the time this launches I will have a course it's called Mast Cell Regain Control and it's really focusing on environmental toxicants in your life, in your home, in your health, in your habits and your hobbies and how to start to reduce those and eliminate those to lower that burden and help get yourself better.

Thanks so much. Great to talk to you today. Thank you.