Ease Your PCOS Symptoms With Chiropractic Care Transcript

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Introduction and Dr. Weitz's Background

Welcome to this episode of the PCOS SOS Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Felice Gersh. On this episode, I am so thrilled to get to interview my friend Dr. Ben Weitz, who's a fantastic stick sports chiropractor, functional medicine practitioner, and he is the host of the popular podcast, which I highly recommend rational Wellness.

Now many women with PCOS suffer from a great many musculoskeletal pain issues like back pain, neck pain, joint pain because they have systemic inflammation and a host of issues like carrying excess weight in most cases.

So many of them don't know what to do about this pain. And they're, you know, pretty much neglected in so many ways. And chiropractic care, especially by a functional medicine chiropractor, can be extremely beneficial.

So welcome, Ben. Thank you so much for joining me because I know you have so much information to share with our audience on this topic. But first, tell us a little bit about your own journey.

Like how did you get into this and expand into the functional medicine world and tell us about what chiropractors do? Many people have no idea. So thank you so much released for having me on your summit on PCOS.

So very excited to be here. And so I've been a chiropractor for 35 years and my journey into chiropractic started when I was trying to figure out what I was going to do in it after college and I was considering going for a PhD in philosophy and then I decided, you know, I really want to do something where I can help people.

And I worked into Madison. I didn't really like do drugs and surgery approach and I had some experience with chiropractic and I thought, Wow, this is a natural form of healing.

I can help patients. I like using natural methods. I already know a certain amount about the anatomy and physiology because I had gotten into exercise and weight training and bodybuilding and and using nutrition to change body composition.

And I thought if I go into chiropractic, I can use my knowledge of the muscles and nutrition and I'll be able to help patients. And so chiropractic is a form of natural healing and a lot of it centers around the use of specific manipulation of joints.

And this is manipulation of the spinal joints from the neck down to the lower back, as well as the extremities.

What Chiropractic and Functional Medicine Do

And if if the joints in the body aren't moving well in the different planes of motion, we can assess that, figure out which way they're not moving, and then use specific amounts of specific manipulation techniques, specific forces in specific directions in a controlled way to increase that motion.

And then the body senses that things are in better alignment, that the joints are moving the way they're supposed to move. And there's six different planes of motion, right?

Each joints supposed to move forwards, backwards, side to side and rotate. And if any of those joints are moving in any of those directions that they're supposed to, then the body senses that.

And then there is problems with the way the body functions, including increased inflammation. And so I got into functional medicine because I had always been involved with nutrition and I got into bodybuilding and became a competitive bodybuilder and learned I could use changes in diet to affect my body composition.

Got my body composition down to 4%, figured out what changes you need to make to grow muscles to change your overall health. And then started figuring out How can I use nutrition to be healthy to play the long game and not just the short game?

And so I discovered Jeffrey Bland and I started going every year to the Jeffrey Bland seminar. He would he was one of the co-owners of Metagenics and he would every year do a tour around some of the major cities.

And every year I would go to the Jeffrey Bland seminar and I would come out with my mind blown all my neurons would be fizzling and I would be so excited about the new medical food, the new strategy for helping patients.

So I was my religion. I was a Bland-ologist And so I got more and more into functional medicine. As time went on. I was going to ask for you to define what functional medicine is.

Okay, so functional matters is a way of helping patients by looking at the root causes. So a lot of conventional medicine is about managing symptoms. Patients have PCOS.

While there's this problem with the hormones, women have too many androgens. We'll just put them on birth control. End of story. We don't have to worry about it, but functional medicine.

We want to go in and say Why is that happening? What's going on? Why is the body imbalance? Why isn't it working the way it's supposed to? Because our bodies are remarkable organisms that can function.

Ideally, we just have to give it the right things and then we have to remove the things that are interfering with it. Well, I couldn't agree more because I too became very well say, enamored of the whole functional medicine paradigm of looking far beyond just symptoms.

Musculoskeletal Health, Posture, and Back Pain

Now, I would say that in conventional medicine, the musculoskeletal system is not really recognized as a really critical part of being healthy. It's like only paid attention to when something hurts.

So what is the connection between like having proper functioning of your joints all over your body, your entire musculoskeletal system, which of course incorporates the bones and the the ligaments, the tendons and the muscle in the fashion, all those different components and say sleep or stress or nutrition, because what's the link, if any?

Well, imagine that we were talking about the people living in your house and now your house was falling down, your roof was leaking, the walls were collapsing, the foundation was sliding.

And you were to say why everything could be fine inside. So the musculoskeletal system is the structural support for the organs and the rest of the body.

And we've got to try to do what we can to optimize the structural function of the body, the nerves that come out from the spine. They're going through these narrow openings where between the vertebrae, if those vertebrae aren't in alignment, it can interfere with those nerves.

The osteopathic theory of osteopathy, a manipulation had to do with if this skeletal structure was in optimal, it would affect the blood flow. We know there's a nerve flow.

We know there's a flow of fluid through the whole body. There's fluid in the intracellular spaces. It goes throughout the body, and the body needs to have that fluid flowing freely as well.

And so it's important for the body is going to sense if the structure of the body is out of kilter, not working right out of balance. And it all, you know, if you have joints out of alignment, the body might cause the muscles to stack them up to protect it.

It will send inflammation in, it will increase inflammation. The body has a keen sense that things aren't the way they're supposed to be. Well, that is very true.

And so many people do suffer, I believe I've read and heard that the number one complaint that patients have is back pain. So you know what? What is back pain?

So many women with PCOS do have back pain and they're just told to take in instead, you know, like ibuprofen, like what is happening when people have back pain anyway?

Well, it's certainly not caused by a deficiency of ibuprofen. There's a number of different things that can happen in the spine that can lead to pain.

But in some way the structure of the spine is in functioning the way it's supposed to. All those joints are not moving the way they're supposed to do.

Sometimes over time, things can get worn down, the disc can get worn down, the disc can balls just push against the nerve that can cause pain instead of it's two vertebrae being like this there like this.

Then there can be pressure on one side to compress the area where the nerve comes out of. If a joint isn't moving, well, then you're going to have pain because you're trying to say, Bend your arm and it's stuck.

There is an impediment because either the muscles are spasming to protect it or the cartilage is in a way. One of the things we do when we manipulate the spine is there can be the connective tissue that lines, the joints that guide the motion between the vertebrae and that connective tissue can get caught between the joint and when we manipulate it, we free up that for said joint capsule.

That's one of the things that leads to acute back pain. And so that's one of the things that we can do. Well, it sounds like you can do a great deal. And in terms of say, what can people do in terms of like getting proper chairs or beds or, you know, like so often people complain about computer positioning.

You know, they're always bending over. So what about ergonomics? I guess they're a better chair that people should be sitting on or types of beds or mattresses, or are those even important?

Super important, yeah. Especially today with people working from home and so many people working at their desk on computers and it's amazing how many more patients end up with back and neck pain because instead of working at a desk with a proper chair, looking at a computer screen, they're sitting on their sofa, hunched over their coffee table, looking at a laptop.

And so we have to resist the forces of gravity. Gravity is pushing down on us. And if our musculoskeletal system is not properly aligned, then there's all sorts of excess stress on our joints, on our muscles.

Fascia, Core Spasm, and PCOS Pain

So if we have good posture, if we maintain the normal or dotted curve in the lower back, if our head is balanced over our shoulders, over our hips, then the structure of the body can basically stay with minimal muscle contraction.

But instead, if you're hunched forward, your head's jutting out. Now the bones are not balanced over the bones. A properly balanced skeleton means that you have the ankle joint, the hip joint, the shoulders they had all in balance.

And all you would need is a little bit of muscular contraction of the calves and you could stand erect without doing anything but poor posture. And now all those extra muscles have to work because gravity is going to pull you down, slumping over your your desk or your laptop computer, sitting with the poor chair.

Now you're putting your lower back, which is supposed to have a backwards curve and your neck, which is supposed to be in alignment with the rest of your spine, you end up with a forward head posture.

Gravity pulls down. You're going to have chronic pain here. And then what do people do? Well, they don't realize the importance of posture, so they go, well, I got to stretch my neck or even stretching you back for 12 hours a day.

You got to get your head back over the rest of your spine. You've got to have a good ergonomic chair. You should be able to look straight ahead at the center of your monitor.

You need adjustable armrests. You don't have to hold your arms up or you're going to use your neck muscles and you've got to have a lumbar support in your chair.

So posture is to the musculoskeletal system wide lifting heavy things was 20 years ago. Well, this sounds like everyone could use some help because like I would say, probably I don't know what percentage.

I'm just making this up. Like 90% of people are sitting wrong and in the wrong chair. And, you know, they're really exacerbating these problems. Now, you've mentioned muscle contraction a few times now.

I've heard that there's a relationship of that and the fascia and then people get these sort of like why do they call them like nodules or lumps and so on, like, and then they get worked out like myofascial release maybe.

Can you talk about what is the fashion and what are those lumps that people feel in their often in their upper back, the link between their shoulders and and what can be done about that because and is that related to muscle contractions.

So the taci is the connective tissue that surrounds the muscles that connects to different compartments of the body and this acid is sort of a ligament is tissue and it helps to maintain that whole structure.

And if that dash is damaged, then you're going to have problems. Consider the fact that separates your abdominal cavity from your cardiovascular cavity, your diaphragm.

Without a properly functioning diaphragm, you're not going to be breathing properly. Your digestive system isn't going to work right? You can end up with acid reflux.

And so having a proper structure in terms of the detaching is super important. And in fact, in PCOS, women often will get back pain, as you mentioned.

And partially this is related to the issues with the ovarian cysts, but it's also due to spasms of the core muscles and also the inflammation. And so the core muscles I mentioned the diaphragm, we also have the multiple it as we have the transverse abdominals and then we have the pelvic floor muscles and they tend to contract painfully in PCOS patients.

And this can play a role in back and pelvic pain. And with chiropractic care we can use specialized manipulation. We also do specialized soft tissue work, as you were mentioning, to break up spasm, to break up trigger points in the muscles, which are nodules that develop.

We also use targeted therapies like red light therapy and electrical stimulation to help reduce muscle spasm. And there are several published case studies showing that chiropractic care was beneficial for women with PCOS, with such symptoms.

And in fact, those case studies showed that there was even a boost in the fertility for those women. So interesting that you mention that because I have heard that there is a connection between musculoskeletal health and fertility.

That's that's really amazing. I'm so excited to hear that there are published studies on that issue.

Inflammation, Weight, and Anti-Inflammatory Supplements

And you mentioned like the diaphragm a couple of times now and also acid reflux. So the diaphragm is part of the

muscle skeletal system, right? I know. Absolutely.

Quite a few women with PCOS develop what's called that like a hiatal hernia where the stomach like moves up into the chest cavity. So all the things that you're talking about can actually help prevent such a thing, like having a hiatal hernia develop.

Yes. And we can also, you know, I've learned some specialized osteopathic techniques for helping to, in some cases, reduce hiatal hernia by gently doing some soft tissue manipulation on the diaphragm.

Wow. That's amazing. Now, the 80% of women with PCOS are overweight or obese. So what's the relationship of obesity and musculoskeletal pain and are there any special precautions that overweight women should take, maybe in terms of protecting their knees or their hips while they're working on this weight loss journey?

Right. You mean besides taking Mozambique? Yes, definitely. Although there maybe there's a place. That's all. Well, let's hit on inflammation. We know that one of the factors in PCOS is inflammation.

We know that inflammation plays a big role and in pain and women who are overweight tend to have more inflammation. When you have more the wrong kinds of fats, you tend to have more inflammation.

We know that some fats are anti-inflammatory like omega threes. We know other fats are pro-inflammatory. We also know that being overweight means you have more fat that can store toxins, and toxins can lead to inflammation.

So some of the things that we can do to address chronic inflammation, besides trying to improve the lining of the body, are using targeted nutritional supplements like curcumin, fish oil and specialized pro resolving mediators.

Well, maybe can you talk about each one of those supplements a little more detail? Absolutely. So curcumin is the active ingredient in turmeric, and we know that turmeric has anti-inflammatory properties, but to me, it's not very well absorbed.

So using curcumin, which is the active ingredient, is going to get us a higher level of absorption and effectiveness. But then even curcumin is not that well absorbed.

So you want to use a specialized form of curcumin, and a number of supplement companies have come up with various forms of curcumin. And we mentioned a couple that we like to use in the office.

One is the meriva form, which is the curcumin is made into a fat soluble form by being blended with fossil title choline, and that makes it pass through the lipid membrane of the cells.

And so we use a form of this from pure encapsulation and then integrative makes a form of curcumin that puts it into a water soluble form there thera cumin.

And we have found this to be very effective and this particular form of cooked human seems to be effective at a lower dosage so we can get a pretty good effectiveness with only two capsules a day.

So especially for the patients who have problems swallowing a lot of capsules, then we like to use fish oil. Fish oil oil is just an amazing nutritional supplement that improves not only inflammation, but cardiovascular health improves insulin sensitivity, which is a problem with patients with PCOS very often.

And I recommend a minimum of two grams of a a high quality omega three supplement and you want to make sure there's two grams of BPA, DHEA, not just two grams of fish oil.

And then the third supplement is something that's derived from fish oil, but you can't really get just by taking fish oil. And these are specialized pro resolving mediators or experts.

And so most of the any inflammatory strategies like take a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory are designed to disrupt the initiation of inflammation. But once inflammation gets going, it and inflammation does have some positive benefits in the body because that's how the immune system is trying to address some problems.

But there's a tendency for inflammation to not resolve. And so these as PMS are also known as resolving age. And because they not only affect depressed glands and the pro-inflammatory mediators, but they help to resolve the inflammation process by binding to specific cellular receptors called g protein coupled receptors, and they promote the resolution of this inflammation.

Traditional anti-inflammatory drugs are they try to block or antagonize the initiation phase of inflammation by blocking the prostaglandins and pro-inflammatory mediators.

But as PMS help to resolve the inflammation process after the immune system has been doing its work, as we know, inflammation too much information is bad, but some inflammation is good.

That's how the immune system does its job.

Diet, Stress, and Nervous System Support

Attacks problems in the body helps bring healing cells, but we don't want that inflammation to continue too long. And so the spms are resolved. They help to resolve the inflammation process.

Well, that is great news for women with PCOS who have so much underlying chronic system inflammation and help out as a functional medicine practitioner.

In terms of food, is there a certain number of foods that you say or servings of different types of foods that may also help to lower inflammation? Absolutely. Yes.

I definitely think that that's the case. And so in general, one of the things you want to try to reduce from the diet are, of course, you want to eliminate sugar whenever you can and get rid of high glycemic carbohydrates because these are going to spike the insulin response and lead to more insulin resistance.

And that also leads to more inflammation. So I like for most people a modified Mediterranean diet that includes a focus on eating lots of servings of fresh organic vegetables, as well as fruits, some healthy fats from things like fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds and as well as having some good quality protein from wild salmon, organic chicken, grass fed beef, and limiting the amount of the starchy carbs depending upon the person's energy needs.

Well, it sounds like great advice, and you're making me very hungry because I. I just love those healthy foods. And I think that's one of the things that happens when you it's almost like you have to do a detox off of the standard American diet and then your taste buds change.

You find that happens with your patients that after a while the foods that they used to eat that they thought were so tasty, they actually have this weird sort of chemical taste and then real whole foods like from the farmer's market, you know.

And of course, we here in Southern California are so lucky to have great farmers markets, but almost anyone can access it even through the Internet, to get fresh Whole Foods.

And then your your taste buds will change, you know, and get some good recipe books and so on and that that really can help. So it sounds like being a functional medicine chiropractor really helps to cover the entire gamut of issues that affect the musculoskeletal system.

And is there any role for the mind body medicine for improving the health of the musculoskeletal system? Do you think stress has a role? Oh, absolutely.

Stress makes everything worse. And where we're all living in the modern world, so we're all going to be exposed to a certain amount of stress. The question is not do you have stress, but how do you manage it?

And so we each need to find our ways to manage stress. For some people, exercise is a great way to manage stress. It's also a way to improve your health and strengthen yourself.

And you must go skeletal system, you cardiovascular system and also finding other ways of managing stress like breathing techniques you're using. There's a number of different strategies.

I often tell patients to use the Andrew Weil 478 breathing technique. It's very easy to learn, takes a few minutes. But any of these specialized breathing techniques are very important.

Most of us are mouth breathers. You want to learn to breathe through your nose, and focusing on your breathing is sort of a form of meditation. And so that's very important.

It's very important when you're eating that you eat in a slow, controlled manner that you're not rushing, you're not eating in the car, you're focused on your food.

And using meditation is a great way to help you manage stress. Well, that's great because so many women with PCOS are sort of well overstressed. They tend to have an upregulated, sympathetic, autonomic nervous system and they they tend to have more stress, more anxiety.

And I see many of them and they have TMJ, you know, they're always grinding their teeth or they're like tensing their shoulders and like they're always creating all this pain.

So by dealing with the stress, they can really help to reduce all of those muscle spasms and tensions and and just feel so much better. And I guess it's sort of like a circular thing, right?

When you have less pain, you also have less stress. Absolutely. You know, one of the things we've been doing in the office recently is stimulating the vagus nerve, which is the nerve that goes from the brain to the guy in the gut to the brain.

And that that plays a big role in this whole stress response. And when you stimulate the vagal nerve, you stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system that rest and digest.

So we'll either use red light cold laser or we'll use a vagal nerve electrical stimulator. And that gets the vagal nerve going. Oh, my gosh, that sounds like a fantastic tool.

And talking about like putting things onto the skin or are there any like rubs or topicals or patches that that are useful? Sure. One topical we like to use is a topical magnesium.

Magnesium is a wonderful nutrient. Everybody needs magnesium. 60% of the population is deficient. It's great for muscle spasms, it's great for mitochondrial function.

It helps to relax you. It's good for sleep.

Finding a Functional Medicine Chiropractor

Oh, my gosh, that sounds fantastic. I think everyone out there listening is like touching all their muscles right now and saying, oh, that kind of hurt.

You know, I could really use a chiropractic treatment. So how would someone find, like, a functional medicine chiropractor like you? Do you have clones out there?

Or maybe they can see, maybe they could come and see you in person like so how can they find you and how

would it like say they live in another part of the country?

Because I guess this isn't really ideal for telemedicine. I would, you know, if some things could be telemedicine. Right. But so how would someone say find you if they would like to be your patient?

Because you you're seeing patients, I think, today, right. It's oh, I will be back in a few minutes, you see. And you know, how would they find you and how could they find if they, you know, happened to live in Oklahoma or something, how could they find someone like you who's really qualified to deal with with all of their musculoskeletal?

And in fact, it turns out their entire body is really going to benefit. So if they want to see me, I'm in Santa monica, California. They can go to my Web site.

drweitz.com, D R W E I T Z.com. They could listen to the Rational Wellness Podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify on YouTube. They can call my office at 3103953111 if they want to see a sports chiropractor just go to Google and put sports chiropractor in your area.

Most sports chiropractors are used to dealing with the soft tissues as well as the skeletal system. And in terms of finding a functional medicine practitioner, really all I can offer is going to the Institute of Functional Medicine website.

Well, that's a lot of resources, right? Okay. So I think every I can't imagine how anyone who's suffering, which is like a huge percentage of women with PCOS as well as the general population suffering from various musculoskeletal aches and pains and issues, would benefit from this type of chiropractic care.

So thank you so much for joining me. This has been incredibly informational and enlightening in so many ways, and really valuing the importance throughout the whole body of this musculoskeletal system is really been emphasized.

And I think everybody is going to go home and take good care and make sure they check out all their chairs and how they're sitting and what they're eating.

It's so important because pain changes the quality of life for the worse. You know, we don't want anyone suffering in chronic pain. So thanks again. And now I know you have to go back to work and thank you for cutting out this time and educating all our viewers on this really important topic.