Heal Your Gut To Reduce Inflammation & Restore Balance Transcript

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Introduction and Doctor Coleu2019s Background

Welcome to another wonderful interview for the MS and Autoimmune Summit. I'm your host and today we're going to get to interview doctor Will Cole, who's a terrific friend.

I've known him for many, many years now. Doctor Cole is a leading functional medicine expert who consults with people around the world via webcam. He started the first functional medicine telehealth centers in the world.

He's been named one of the top 50 functional and integrative doctors in the nation. Doctor Cole specializes in investigating underlying factors of chronic disease, customizing a functional medicine approach for thyroid issues, autoimmune conditions like multiple sclerosis, hormonal imbalances, digestive disorders.

In neurodegeneration. Neuroinflammation. Welcome. Doctor Cole, is there anything that I missed? No, I need you as my hype brand at the end. At the beginning of the day, that will be my affirmation for the day.

Well, you missed some things. I. I have two golden doodles, two kids. Oh, beautiful wife. And I have to say, I don't want to say bragging rights, but I have to be one of the first.

If not, I think let's just say one of the first up in the first cohort. That's Red wall certified practitioner, which I have hanging in my office. When I consult patients online, I'm very proud of that.

You know, it is so, so, so fun. When we were able to do the live events for the public, live events for practitioners. And, you know, I've made it my mission to teach the public and teach practitioners like, oh my gosh, there is so much we can do that really reverse chronic diseases, including multiple sclerosis, including other neurologic syndromes.

Yeah, truly. Thank you. Thanks for having me. It's great to see you. So let's talk about the microbiome mind connection. Yeah. What does that mean? Well, if we're talking to the public doesn't mean.

And how does that become actionable. So the gut and brain are formed from the same fetal tissue. So when babies are growing in the mother's womb, the gut and brain are formed from the same cells on a cellular somatic level, even.

And they're inextricably linked for the rest of our life through what's known as the gut brain axis or the connection between the gut and the brain. And if you think about it, who are the people that are listening this or watching this right now?

The intestines kind of even resemble the brain. I don't think that's random. And somehow our ancestors knew the gut was the seat of the soul. They didn't have randomized controlled trials.

They just knew there was something ineffable. When you look at traditional Chinese medicine, erratic medicine, traditional medicine as a whole around the world, no matter where your ancestors came from, they talked about this gut it pockets.

Of course, famously said, all disease begins in the gut, Wolf. All disease begins in the gut. All health can begin in the gut. And we talked about the sort of mind connection of the gut.

The Microbiome-Mind Connection

And now we know science is catching up with antiquity, that 95% of serotonin is made in the gut, stored in the guy. 50% of dopamine is made in the gut, stored in the gut.

So they don't way that researchers kind of understand the mechanism of how all this works is not necessarily those neurotransmitters passing through the blood brain barrier, but they work through a crosstalk system of motility and nerve.

The nervous nervous system, cellular communication of stimulating the vagus nerve, the largest cranial nerve in the body, which gets its root word Latin, Greek.

I don't remember what it is, but it's the wanderer. It's the wandering nerve and it's part of. It's the master regulator of the resting, digesting, grounded, anti-anxiety proper being a having nervous system regulation state and healthy nervous system as a whole state is in part and largely for many people.

We need a healthy vagus nerve. And that's what's innovating that cross between the gut and the brain and the brain and the gut. It's a bidirectional communication line.

So it's it's for these reasons that we have to look at the microbiome, mind connection from a physiological level and of course, as you have pioneered in this space, this this cytokine model of cognitive function, looking at how inflammation impacts how our brain works and how our nervous system works.

And 75% of the immune system is in the gut. So to understand inflammation, which is a product of the immune system, we have to look at where the predominance of the immune system resides, which is in the gastrointestinal system.

So there's profound, far reaching implications that the gut impacts our mood, impacts our nervous system, impacts how our brain works, and impacts how our immune system impacts our nervous system.

So it's profoundly important and near and dear to both of our work and seeing people heal from it, you know, and that means the food we eat is profoundly important.

The food we had as an infant profoundly important because that shapes her microbiome. Now, can we talk a little bit about, you know, we we've just said how important the microbiome is.

What do we do to help this gut garden thrive? Yeah. You're right. When you look at the research of those early years, of the first 3 to 5 years, I've seen studies looking at the sort of very formative time, in our lives as human.

The first 3 to 5 years of our lives determining this gut garden, this microbiome metropolis, all the trillions of bacteria in our gut, depending on the study that you site has upwards of 100 trillion bacteria, and we have about 30 trillion human cells.

So we are exponentially more bacteria than human. That's impacting our immune system, that's impacting the conversion of hormones. I think 20% of the thyroid hormone.

Every cell of your body has a thyroid, receptor site, 20% of thyroid hormones converted from T4 to T3 in the gut. So for anybody that's watching this out there, the gut is so much more than just your digestion, which is a part of it.

And it certainly is a window into a check engine light, if you will, of something that may be off, but you don't even necessarily. I know you, and I've seen people of many over the years that don't necessarily have overt extreme digestive symptoms to have underlying gut components to why they feel the way that they do.

So I want to open up this conversation for people that are watching this and think, well, it's just the digestive problem, or maybe even it's just the specific autoimmune issue.

It's far reaching and it's a spectrum from mild symptoms to more diagnosable symptoms, everything in between. So it's rare when I look at labs to see someone that has a great looking gut.

And I'm not saying it's the only piece of the puzzle because it's not, but it's a foundational piece of the puzzle. And

for some people, it's a signif.

It's it is one of the only pieces, but it's typically multifaceted. And we have to look at the gut's role here. So as you said, every food we eat is either feeding health or feeding health problems.

There's no neutral food. There's no Switzerland. I'm doing nothing for your physiology meal. It some in negligible ways, of course, but some of the ways that you won't notice it's it's in food is information.

Food is information for your biochemistry. And we are alive because of brilliant biochemistry. So we have to look at what foods love your body back and what foods don't love your body back.

And this isn't a moral indictment of like toxic diet culture. This is just saying bio individuality reigns supreme. Everybody's created differently and everybody's a different point of their health journey, which, you know, at different points of your health really patients.

You've seen what loves you back. Now it may not. That list is going to change. And as you improve your gut health, improve resilience, reclaim your birthright, your health, that list is going to evolve.

So it's okay to to check in with your body. And this is a continuing to eat foods that don't love you back isn't restrictive. It's self-respect. It's awareness. It's intuition.

It's worthiness of saying no. I'd rather feel great more than I miss that food that doesn't love me back right now. So it really starts with that bio individual conversation of figuring out what foods love your body back, and which ones don't, and having a come to Jesus moment and saying, look, this is not this isn't going to be sustainable here.

So and that list is going to be different for different people. We could go, if you want me to go down the list of the things I see most often, don't not loving people back, but it ultimately is different.

And I just like for you, I know historically eggs didn't love your body back and but like maybe I do fine with eggs. This isn't saying eggs are bad. This is about finding out what works for you.

And on a really happy note, I've discovered that eggs love me back now. So I get the eggs again. So perfect. Do change things. Change that great that the perfect example is like don't even be holy.

What a blessing, right? I mean, what a blessing that, okay, years ago, maybe eggs didn't work for somebody, but you felt resilience and it's okay to evolve and adapt.

That's part of being human and not being totally attached and make it your identity because your body is amazing, capable of amazing things if you give it the time to do so.

Food Sensitivities and Gut Healing

Yes, you know, eventually healing. My God, I was able to. It was a big decision Tuesday to try eggs again. Because trigeminal neuralgia is so horrific, it's very hard to risk having that flare.

But I said, you know what, I try eggs. And I was just so thrilled to discover that I could have them. So I get to have eggs, I'll make a chili. And then the next day I have, poached eggs in my chili.

It's just like, oh my God, it's one of our favorite meals. I love it, so good. Okay, now I want to talk about this term shame flexion. So inflammation I made it up doctor was yeah let's what does that mean.

Why are we talking about that. So as you part you know part of our jobs in our work is we're teachers, right? I mean, that's where educators and I think there's something resonate with some of our top patient base over the years, professionally, which is interesting statistic.

Our teachers and engineers and nurses would be the third, though. They make the best patients. I'll just say this. Engineers, teachers and and, nurses, because they all kind of understand power of education. Right.

And but also they're curious about health and they want to get to the root cause. Right. Engineers do certainly. And the teachers have a way with kind of conveying information.

So they might want point of saying this is I kind of have a common bond between these people. And the I woke up one morning, I thought, okay, that's a good way of putting this made up for it is a good way of putting explaining the research around shame and things that cause shame, like chronic stress and unresolved trauma and impact on human biochemistry, on inflammation or shame, inflammation or shames impact on inflammation.

This dysregulation of the larger neuro immuno endocrine access, the intersection between the nervous system, brain nervous system at large, the immune system i.e.

inflammation and the endocrine system, our hormones. So the research is just fascinating to me, and it's something that I got to write about a lot in my fourth book, my last, my best previous book called Gut Feelings, which is talking about this intersection between the gut and our feelings and the feelings in our gut, the physical impact on the mental, emotional, spiritual, and then the mental, emotional, spiritual stuff impact.

I'm a physiological, so we have to look at both and not either or to understand things like anything from mental health issues to autoimmune problems to metabolic problems to hormonal problems.

So I have every new telehealth patient fill out an ace. I have them fill out an Ace questionnaire, Ace score, adverse childhood experiences. It's looking at very heavy things complex things like sexual abuse, growing up, physically abuse, growing up, neglect, growing up and your adolescent childhood years, your family, your parents relationship.

Growing up. Was there substance abuse in the home? Growing up was a mental health issues in the home. Growing up and researchers. So like anyone, I'd ask for about 4 to 6.

Not even that high to get an ace. You just checking. Yes. For each one of those sections is at a exponential. I mean, it depends on the health issue you're talking about, but 10 to 15 times plus the risk factors of being diagnosed with an autoimmune problem, a metabolic problem with me to even trouble losing weight, the body in that fight or flight mode there of course digestive problem, mental health issue.

So we have to look at these things that are stored on the body on a cellular level. But they're not environmental toxins. It's the toxin of trauma. And how do we metabolize and detox stored trauma, just like we would an environmental toxin or something on a physiological level.

But these sort of epigenetic tags live in their past, our not just in our own life, but even through family. So when you look at the research around transgender, a, a transgenerational trauma or intergenerational trauma of how it's passed on through bloodlines, through family, so there's studies looking at the Holodomor, the Ukrainian genocide in the early fifth century, the, of course, the Holocaust in Poland, in Germany, in Rwanda.

But the Hutus and Tutsis that sort of saw that the people that went through these horrible atrocities due to political, historical events, they saw methylation changes.

They saw the way the inflammation was expressed in their body, changed the person. They went through the trauma, but they also saw it through their kids and their grandkids, the same epigenetic variants.

So these are these are why we're again, research is just catching up with this. But all of this is is impacting someone's physiology. And trauma is not the event.

Shame, Trauma, and Inflammation

It's the response to the event. It's the end. It's anything that we've been unable to process, unable to truly deal with and face. That's what trauma is, because oftentimes people will gaslight themselves and say, well, it's like I didn't go through a horrible atrocity.

I didn't go through something like the Holocaust. So then they think it's not that big of a deal, or they look at someone in their own life and say, I didn't go through them.

It wasn't that bad. But again, you could have siblings in the same home. I see this all the time and they one person has no memory of these things and it didn't stick with them.

It just like rolled off of them like water on a bird. But the next child, who's now an adult, really affected them. The words of their parent or that that were the childhood that they lived through.

So we have to look at the bio individuality of somebody whose own interplay between nature and nurture. And we're all different. So we we all have our ability to messily on a genetic level, to deal with mold and environmental toxins.

Some people are good detoxes, some people aren't so good. So two with mental, emotional, spiritual factors. So that's a shame. Formation is is really the research of of the stuff that we have to deal with to heal.

And I want to reinforce all of that. We saw extraordinary aces in one of my clinical trials. And then I added the Ace questionnaire to my next clinical trials.

And I took the Ace question myself and I was surprised at how high, extraordinarily high my score was. And as you said, I had shrugged off all of those trying experiences.

And now as an adult, I realize that I now consider for me the adverse childhood experiences that I had to be certainly part of my root cause. And then, you know, dealing with additional support to work through some of those residual traumas, is something I now talk about with, like you, with all of our patients, in our tribe, that it's a factor.

Just like your microbiome is a factor, like the toxin environment is a, a factor that it's very helpful to assess and then to begin to look for resources to help you process that trauma.

Certainly now. So we have since this is an immersion autoimmune summit, many of the people listening are folks with, M. S. and autoimmune issues. What are the kinds of root cause things that you would investigate?

You know, clearly, for we've said already we're talking about microbiome, the Ace questionnaire. And I think that is a really important one. Well, also you investigating doctor. Cool.

So it starts with the most unsexy part of of all that we do. But yet it's most profoundly important. It's a good comprehensive health history. Right. It's like everybody's going to be different.

So that's the first because that tells us on a clinical level, what are the proverbial stones that are most likely to have something underneath it? So I just want to open that conversation up for the person that's watching this, is that there's no placement for a clinical acumen in bio individual investigation into these things, because I'm going to mention some of the things that I see most time clinically, but I don't want people to go down a rabbit hole and think, well, that's me, right. But just just because it looks like a doc doesn't make it a doc in health, it could be a goose, it could be a doc imposter.

And what we see is the check engine light, the Ms. symptoms, the flares, the whatever other autoimmune issue ulcerative colitis, Crohn's, Hashimoto's, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, or just what the world would call mystery illness.

Like maybe it's not even diagnosable. You just know it's inflammatory. These are check engine light. Why is the check engine light on? What's underneath that proverbial hood is going to be different from person to person.

We know the body's doesn't feel safe. That's the commonality. There's a dysregulation going on. The immune system wants to protect you. It's meant to inflammation is meant to fight off viruses and bacteria and heal wounds.

But there's a dysregulation going on because the body doesn't feel safe. And even if you think about what's happening on a molecular level, a cellular level, that molecular mimicry that's happening, this mechanism of action that's happening with autoimmunity when the immune system mistakes, quote unquote, a tissue for a pathogen, that's the body not feeling safe.

It's the body trying to protect you, but it's feeling unsafe. So yeah, maybe there's a pathogen or something in the tissue and that's the body trying to protect you.

But it's a lack of safety. Something is disturbing the safety in the home that is your body. And we have to figure out what is breaking that trust, what is breaking that safety that your body's trying to protect you from.

And so we have to look at the physiological and the psychological and health histories will determine what should we look what from a clinical perspective standpoint, what labs what what protocols would we integrate to to confirm or not from a differential diagnosis?

What is going on here. So some big things that I think should be looked at. Of course, I don't want to spend too much time on it because we talked about it.

But looking at the landscape of the gut, looking at the microbiome, looking at any bacterial, opportunistic or pathogenic bacteria, looking at intestinal integrity or leaky gut syndrome, things passing through the gut that shouldn't be able to pass through the gut like undigested food proteins, i.e.

food sensitivities and bacterial toxins called lipopolysaccharide, which can trigger that molecular mimicry, too. So you want to look at where the two thirds of the immune system resides to understand it.

Some researchers like Alessio Fasano, I mean other ones. I said that as almost a precondition for autoimmunity that you have to have some intestinal lining issues.

So I don't know if that's fully true, but it certainly is more way more common than not. And we should look into it more, and I see it enough on labs to know we have to look.

We have to look there for people because it's very vastly, profoundly important. So the gut's role, I would look at other bio toxins, which when you look at lipopolysaccharide and bacterial toxins and in the form of leaky gut syndrome, passing into the bloodstream, that's a by bio toxin.

But let's open it up to other bacteria, other viruses, other mold, other parasite bio toxins. Nature toxins are a way here. And there's a very high percentage of people that in our community, the autoimmune community that have of course, methylation gene variants, but also HLA gene variants, human leukocyte antigens.

And I see a very high percentage of people that have this gene, snips of HLA, that regulates the body's inflammatory response to bio toxins, specifically mold.

But other bio toxins as well. So I would want to look at the genetic piece. And again, the interplay between nature and nurture and on a physiological level, and look at these things that I remember years ago, you had me speak at one of your first two first events about Lyme, Lyme and Tickborne issues and how these things could trigger autoimmune issues, but also mimic, as they're called, the great matchmakers are great imitators for a reason, because even if it's not mis, even though, you know, pathogens can trigger autoimmune issues, sometimes it's just a neuro inflammatory response that it's somewhere on this autoimmune inflammation spectrum.

What we want, we need to look there, not just with tick borne issues, but bio toxins as a whole. And then I would look, of course, sadly, the messed up world we live in is the manmade environmental toxins.

I think the research says the average American has about a teaspoon of microplastics in their brain. This is wildly just disturbing. But again, we have to know what we're dealing with to do something about it.

This isn't about fear mongering. This is about empowering people to say, look, this is the world we're living in. We can't just stick our head in the sand.

We have to deal with it. So I would look at microplastics forever. Chemicals or PFAs, herbicides, pesticides, of course, and heavy metals. So that's a big area.

But those are things that we need to look at a what can make the body feel unsafe.

Root Causes in Autoimmune Disease

And then same with the feelings side of gut feelings. Look at stress and trauma. That is a little bit more complex because nutritionally or detox protocol or whatever sort of cleaning house we have to do on a physical level, it's a lot more complex to deal with stress and trauma.

You can't just say, you know, don't have that trauma anymore like you would a food, but you you need to have these conversations of integrating somatic practices in integrating therapies are going to be dealing with this on a nervous system level.

And I typically have a patient pick something active and something past him to start with. So it could be journaling is a great way to metabolize stored trauma.

The journal speak in the researcher on that of kind of they call ugly journaling, basically putting all the things you never would meet anybody and putting pen to paper, writing it out, not typing on your phone, which works different parts of the brain by actually writing penmanship.

What does it feel like to be muted today? Which is a heavy statement for someone that's going through a health journey. But to do that 20 minutes a day, you could burn the paper afterwards.

But I've seen people, as their flares go tremendously when they start to be their own somatic therapist through journaling for a moment, we're talking about is free writing.

I think this is an incredibly stream of consciousness, a lot of great research showing if you engage in this free writing, it does decrease the number of your visits, number of urgent care visits, hospitalizations, health care utilization.

And I talked to people about the power of whatever challenge you are experiencing in life, whatever that is. Write about it and you can decide to burn the paper.

Throw it away. Keeping a journal I have had plenty of unplanned bumps in my life, and I have always found that that free writing was an incredibly useful tool to help me process and understand what was happening, develop more useful responses to it, and to, you know, own my role on it.

Like, okay, I made those decisions. I'm not going to make those decisions the next time I'm making better decisions. And it has been profoundly, profoundly helpful.

This is one of the, in some ways, it may be one of the most important conversation points from this conversation we have with Doctor Cole is the power that you have.

It cost only your little notebook, your pieces of paper, a pen or pencil. And I tell people, you don't have to read it. You could do a single piece of paper and throw it away.

I have, many of these notebooks, and I've kept them every now and then to go back and look at it. Then it's pretty

interesting to see my evolution of thinking through some of the various unplanned traumas.

And we all have them. Shit happens, you know, things don't go the way you want to. Did it get the beautiful, romantic partner that you want to get? The raise that you wanted, the child that you thought you're going to have turned out to be a little more of a challenge than you planned.

Your dog died. Stuff happens that you were. Yeah, you know, and that are deeply upsetting. And then you have to figure out how to go forward. And free writing is for me and for my patients has been incredibly helpful.

So I want to reinforce this. I think this is one of the brilliant, brilliant moves that costs you a little bit of time. Yeah. And just like anything else, stay consistent with that.

You can't do it once and say it didn't work for you. You have to stay consistent. Like going to the gym once and saying the gym didn't work. Good for you.

You're training that nervous system, training that vagus nerve. You're clearing stuff out. That's going to take time. So it's to stay true to the practice that it is really, really profound.

You know, for me, you know, I had those high ace scores. I did see talk therapy. But you're also part of that was free writing about, all of those traumas that I had not if knowledge for so many years, had for me certainly was a profound shift in healing.

A couple things I want everyone listening today is go back and add up your adverse childhood experiences and contemplate the possibility of free writing about that, whether you had one or 7 or 5.

I predict that if you would take a few minutes every day to write about that experience just for you, right, that it will be part of your healing of that.

Okay. So beyond we've talked about a lot. I want what you to give our listeners what you think are the simple starting things that they could do to help calm their nervous system and lower this autoimmune process.

Yeah. Well, I would say pick if you look at both sides of this buckets, the if we're using that symbolic cliche of gut feelings and we think of gut instincts, butterflies in my stomach, this interplay between the cellular and the spiritual.

How what is going on here? I would pick something, at least one thing. If you're new to this, pick something new. Or maybe you've done something that I assume most people that are watching this have done something.

So pick something new in each of those buckets and I'll give you some in a second. Or let's just say this sometimes it's not the something new. Sometimes it's just really owning and being consistent with the things you already have.

Because it's sometimes we do have to shake things up and bring new tools into the toolbox, certainly.

Practical Steps to Calm the Nervous System

But sometimes, and I know you've seen this, I've seen this clinically where it's like, okay, people want the next sexy biohacker or the thing to buy or the wellness trend.

Maybe, okay, maybe you need that, but maybe you just need to be consistent. And the one bio hack you can't buy is consistency. And sometimes it's just doing the thing.

And it's not. It's not sexy. It's not alluring. It's not clickbait worthy. On social media. It's just being consistent with what you already know. On a deep level, this thing loves me back.

I just don't want to do it. And sometimes it's just having a reckoning with yourself of saying, you know, I just need to put my my nose down and be consistent, because that's how you will see changes with any of these practices.

None of this, none of this will make a difference to you. Nothing that we say today will make a difference if you're not consistent with it. So I just speak on that.

And then if it is bringing some additional things that I think would be great soups and stews, I think you and me have a love for this, but like just go maybe on a month of like, snooping, where you still have, you can have other foods, but maybe a week or two of just soups and broths, like something.

Think of it like a, it's, it's kind of, a gut siesta, a gut calming time of rest and grounding and nourishment and repair. This is your nervous system.

This is 75% of the immune system. So do a little soup and broth thing I think is a wonderful way to do it. Could be a bone broth base with protein, easy to digest vegetables that are soft and cooked in the, You can even puree them if you have more digestive problems and broths throughout the day.

And you could do plant based broth to mix it up. I still would do bone broth, but add in a ginger broth, a seaweed broth or galangal broth or something like that.

So that's on the physical side. I think that's a good move for people. If you haven't done that, I would lean into it and then something on the feeling side or gut feelings, I would say something active and something passive.

Two of my favorite ones would be active. I mean, something you have to do. It's a practice. It's an exercise. It's a routine. Journaling would be on top of my list, like we said, to be consistent with that practice.

Something passive is something that you don't necessarily have to like, do, but it's something that's happening in the background. So transcutaneous vagal nerve stimulation is something that I've seen great success with clinically of just 20, 20 minutes a day.

People could do more than that to stimulate. It's these auricular branches of the vagus nerve on the ear or the neck, which is stimulating the aspect of the nervous system that's weak.

So why I say it's passive is that you can go do you could have stack actually you could be doing other things around the house. You could be journaling and wearing the bagel nerve stimulation device.

So if you're short on time or overwhelmed by all of this, I like these wearables for this kind of stuff. Yeah. So I think those are good steps in the right direction, I think centered on the things we're talking about today.

Well, well, Doctor Cole, this has been wonderful. Great to see. I know you still seeing patients. Yes. Why don't you tell our listeners how they could find you?

Where to Find Doctor Cole

And if they wanted to consult with you as their physician, how would that work? Everything's that doctor will Qualcomm as Dr.. Will collect all the information there is there to the telehealth clinic.

We see people around the world links to my podcast the Art of Being Well, which you've been on before. I'd love to have you back any time. Standing invitation for Doctor Wells anytime.

And, what else might I have a new book coming out, which you think? Thank you. You wrote a blurb for it, and Doctor Balls will be on the back cover of it.

It's called heal Yourselves, which I wrote with my friend doctor Josh ax, and it's all about cellular health and solid communication. A lot of things that we talked about, that physical and mental, emotional, spiritual of how that impacts us on a cellular level.

So that's some of the stuff I have going on at this point. Okay. Doctor, will cold come check it out. And if you have a

complex medical problem, he is an amazing resource.

I certainly recommend, because you can access his practice anywhere in the world. Much love to you, my friend. Must love talk to him. All right. Bye bye.