Introduction and Dr. Josh's Background

Hello and welcome back to Reversing Mast Cell Activation Syndrome and Histamine Intolerance Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Meg Mill. And today I'm joined by Dr. Joshua Helman, who is a Harvard trained, board certified physician and emergency medicine and lifestyle medicine.

He is a former medical director of the Hippocrates Health Institute, and has worked at the TrueNorth Health Center with a focus on fasting. He also has a focus on longevity and Alzheimer's and dementia.

And so we're going to talk with Dr. Josh today about longevity and about lifestyle approaches for histamine intolerance. And MCAS. So we're going to get into some work on energy and lifestyle and all of the things that you can do in that area.

Thank you so much for being with us today, Dr. Josh. I think it's it's a it's an absolute pleasure. And yeah, and I know we've spoken before, but, you know, this is really exciting.

Yes. I'm so happy to have you here and to get into all of the good things that we're going to talk about today. But before we get started, could you just give us a little bit of your background and really what led you to where you are today?

I feel like finding everyone's journeys are so interesting. Yeah. So for me, I started off, I was one of these biochemistry nerds. At 17, I was reading biochemistry textbooks as as basically as a second language.

So, and, I, you know, I got two degrees in biochemistry, two degrees from Harvard, you know, and ended up in emergency medicine and, you know, very traditional approach.

And then about a dozen years ago, my health was suffering. I was 50 pounds overweight, high blood pressure. And, you know, here I was this this, I thought I was pretty smart, right?

And I couldn't fix my own problems. And that's. And that's why that's when I took a step back and said, you know what, Josh? You got to find, you know, be open to other ideas.

And and that's basically how I found how I found a solution, which is through, through through plants. You know, I became the medical director at a raw vegan retreat and then worked at a fasting center for a few years and then ended up, at an IV Clinic, reversing Alzheimer's and Lyme disease and mold toxicity and, but but to my mind, this is all a natural progression because, you know, if you look at at how medicine was practiced thousands of years ago through plants.

So, yeah. Yes, I know, and I love that. I feel like when with most of us in this field, it's that personal journey that you've been there, you've had the experiences and realize, okay, you're not getting all the answers, you're not feeling better and why.

Lifestyle Medicine for MCAS and Histamine Intolerance

And then there's you wanting to share that with others. It's so powerful. Exactly. But, you know, to be clear, I was selfish myself. I mean, I, I had problems and I needed to fix them, and and what, what I had been taught wasn't working.

So, you know. Yes. Yes. Well, I know that you practice lifestyle medicine, so I wanted to start just by talking about, you know, with someone that has MCAS or has histamine intolerance where you would start in that approach.

Sure. So so there are many different categories. So, so the first one to talk about is food. And you know, every everyone with MCAS is going to have their own unique sensitivities.

But I'm a big advocate of in general, fruits, vegetables and whole grains and avoiding added salt, oil and sugar. And I know that may sound very restrictive, but, you know, I've seen people turn around, you know, that was interesting with, you know, getting fasting patients, with MCAS when they're fasting often their symptoms will go away completely.

And it's only when they refilled that the symptoms will come back. And and presumably what's happening is when they're feeding, they're feeding the bacteria in the gut into the re feeding portion of the fast.

I think that's the most critical to to ensure that, the symptoms go away. So so I think diet what you put in your mouth is one of the keys to lifestyle medicine.

Another one is, is physical activity exercise. You know, it's amazing how as people, we're designed to move, we're not designed to spend all day sitting in front of a TV screen or computer screen.

We're actually designed to to go out into exercise and, and live. So that's another key. And then reducing stress levels. Now of course our ancestors had periods of stress but not not the constant, you know, like, oh, I have to check my social media because maybe someone responded to my post and, and and yeah.

So stress trying to figure out ways to stress to, to reduce stress. And you know, there's so many different approaches. The key is to find the way that works for you.

And then another component is a sense of community connection. And you know, I unfortunately in in modern society now it's like people barely know their neighbors.

And and it didn't used to be that way. I think it used to be you would be around, you know, maybe 50, 100 or 200 people that you would see on a regular basis.

But I think finding a sense of community is very important. And you brought up something that is interesting when you brought up the social media that the work constantly bombarded by information and that in itself can feel stressful.

I think that was a great point because sometimes it's just like there's so much information out there and you feel like it's hard to keep up even when you have a health condition that you're trying to learn more about.

It's like, okay, I have to listen to this podcast and I have to learn this, and we're on the summit and we're doing. And it just feels overwhelming because we have so much information available.

What do we even use really. Right. And, and, social media was developed specifically to maximize our dopamine. I mean, it's been made to be addictive so that, you know, you finish watching one video and there's another one that pops up within three seconds.

So, so it's it's designed to, you know, overwhelm you. And and for that reason, people need to be aware of that and take a step back. I'm not saying never, never get your information from social media or or online or YouTube or things like that.

But what I am saying is be mindful of it and you have to put yourself first, you know? Yes. And do some of those techniques to really bring you back into that parasympathetic nervous system.

I think that's key to. Yes, definitely. Yeah. One of the other thing areas that I, that I know you focus on is energy medicine. So I'd love to talk. That's so interesting.

And I'd love to talk about how energy medicine fits in here. Yeah. So I would say it fits in in several different ways.

So there are devices, you know, you can you know, but when I think of energy, it's like, get out in the sun.

I mean, that's ultimately that's the that's the ultimate source of most of the energy. So and I understand if you're, you know, if it's the middle of the winter and you're, you're up, north, you know, that may not be, as useful.

And or not useful, but practical. But but let's say, you know, some of the winter, there's still things that you can do. There's, you know, infrared technology.

Energy Medicine Tools and Modalities

I'm a I'm a big fan of, using, and I'm blanking on the name of it, but but there's technologies that will, using energy, open up your, it's basically alternating, currents.

PEMF is what it's called pulsed electronic magnetic, therapy. And what it will do is it will open up both, capillaries and your lymphatic system. And there's several different devices, but, you know, definitely look up PEMF.

This was basically using energy to open up, the conduits, in both your, vascular system and your lymphatic system and the, the, the reason I like some of the infrared technologies is you're basically you're charging mitochondria, which as many of your, viewers, know, mitochondria are key not only for energy production and in every cell in your body, but also for removing toxins and certain fatty acid metabolism.

So those, but but, you know, I, I can't believe how many different energy medicine machines there are out there on the market. I mean, when I was the medical director to Parker, these literally, like, we probably had 30 different energy medicine, tools, that we work with patients.

But to be honest with you, there were we probably also had about 100 other different energy devices that were just locked away in a garage because, you know, there's there's only so much that you can do.

and we're just this is just for educational purposes only. But do you have any recommendations that are your favorites or go to that you would recommend people check out? Wow.

I'm putting you on the spot here. that's that's tough. I would say definitely look at PEMF, definitely look at some of the red light therapies. And, I also like some of the therapies where they'll inject sound into, into a, into the mattress or bed that you're, that you're on.

yeah. So and and I like things like brain tap where you have many different modalities. You have both the light and the binaural, the sound. yeah. So I and I would say try, try different things.

I don't have just one favorite. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Just really everybody responds differently to different things. Finding those tools I always say like create a toolbox.

We're looking at having the toolbox for you that are at because everybody's tools are a little bit different. And what they respond to. But if you have that go to like these are the things that work for me and I have that to go to when I need it.

It's so helpful. Oh definitely. Yeah. Yeah. But but but but again again sun. Sun is sun is number one. Yes. Bundle up if you're if it's winter and you need to, you know when you have a dog that forces you to have to walk sometimes and get out in the sun do is, there's there's reasons to get outside.

Well, those are all really helpful things. And another thing that I've heard you talk about adding is in is essential oils. That's definitely true. I view essential oils as nature's pharmacy.

And and it's interesting and just looking at it, it's they've been used for thousands of years ago. The ancient Egyptians you know, there's hieroglyphics describing, you know, using them medicinally and for other, other purposes. So, yeah, I and especially if you have, mcats or histamine, there's, there are many different essential oils

that can help lower histamine levels.

so some of my favorites would be lemon essential oil, frankincense, eucalyptus. And, and I could go on. And I think just like with the devices, you know, try different essential oils and find out the ones that work for you.

And there are many different ways to use it. You know, you can you can, you know, rub them on with a carrier oil if you know the source, as in if it's from the plant and not petroleum, you can put many of these under your tongue.

So they're very to me they're a tool. I actually I'm going to pull it out because I have the, I have the frankincense sitting right on my desk, I keep, I keep it here.

So it's, which is funny when you said that I was like I just actually just keep a bottle on my desk and, and use it as needed because it is they're easy tools and there's not a lot, a lot of reaction there.

Natural. And I agree, like you've said, they've been used for thousands of years. So it's it's something that's especially for people that are oversensitive.

Now actually diluting them can be important too, especially when you have sensitivity.

Essential Oils for Histamine Support

agreed. But so for example, for frankincense, I could put a drop or two under my tongue. And though, I mean, I'll taste it, you know, smell it and it'll get absorbed into my bloodstream within a few seconds.

So I also know and and I've actually done this on an interview where I took lavender, you know, at the beginning of a, you know, just show how to take it.

And wow, I was super relaxed actually doing the interview was it was rather difficult just because I was so calm. Instead of taking and activating. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

As a, as, as opposed to lemon essential oil would probably, you know, be more activating, you know. Yeah that's that's funny. But yeah that's just showing the power of the, the essential oil.

And you put your, you prefer a plant based diet. So you're looking at getting all of your nutrients through plants. Now someone who what do you do when someone has histamine intolerance.

So you know, one of the things I find with people that are really highly sensitive and we're trying to do a low histamine diet, is there's confusion in that diet.

A lot of times they're not following a correct low histamine diet, but then also the fact that you're limiting some things that are actually plant based that are really good for you.

So I usually recommend them short term for discovery. And then we're working on stabilizing mast cells on, you know, healing the gut, doing all of the other things so that we can tolerate more foods.

I think that's exactly right. And, you know, there's certain, like nightshades I would probably avoid to start with, you know, things like, white potatoes and eggplant, then things like that.

But, you know, I mean, think about fruits like watermelon. It's mainly water. You know, I don't think that's gonna, for most people, release histamine.

Yeah. Oh, yes. Yeah. Absolutely. Well, I want to get into I know your specialty is also about reversing aging. So I want to talk about the connections really when we're looking at aging at all timers.

And let's jump into, you know, a more a little bit more on reversing aging and where you start with that. Yeah. So

this whole field I find so exciting because if we were having this conversation a dozen years ago and you said, you know, doctor Josh is it possible to reverse your biologic clock?

I'd be like, yeah, I don't, I don't know. Whereas, I mean, that's just a dozen years ago, whereas now there's a whole body of research showing and actually not just in people, but in all animals.

If you have pets, you know, going down to, you know, small and, you know, small, even fungus, that that is the same biochemical pathways that determine both energy production and aging, that those two processes are intimately linked.

So one way to think about it is if you have a candle, if it's not burning as bright, it'll burn longer. It's the same concept with way, the way that animals, use energy.

And, you know, one of the classic ways to extend animal life is calorie restriction. And and I remember hearing that, I don't know, a dozen years ago and thinking, well, that's not fun, right?

I mean, I'm just gonna I'm just gonna, like, not eat, you know, all the time. And, live longer, like, it's not worth it. But now what I realize is if you eat less calorie dense foods.

So, for example, most plant foods, certainly fruits and vegetables, most of them have much lower calorie density. So, you know, I can eat, I can eat a watermelon, and I'd be full.

Plant-Based Nutrition, Protein, and Fiber

And that's not a lot of calories. For example. Okay, so what about protein? So how are you recommending getting some getting protein in the diet when we're eating more plant based.

Yeah. So so the first thing is because if you're eating plant whole plants like India not nuts stuff that's highly processed in a, you know, in an industrial process.

But if you're actually eating a whole plant that, you know, came out of the ground or from a tree, by definition, in order for it to be alive, it has to have protein.

Protein is one of the building blocks. So by definition, if you're eating plants, whether whether it's, you know, an apple or broccoli or, you know, a whole grains, there is protein in there.

What I find is most people are actually not protein deficient in modern society. And that may have been different 100 years ago, but today. But you can check, you can do a blood test.

You can look at your total protein level and you can look at your albumin, which is another protein in the blood. And if those are normal and in 90% of people they are normal.

You're not protein deficient. So so it's interesting this whole focus on protein goes back to the 1930s when there was a company, Nestle, that, a multinational company or American company that was actually pushing, wanted to push, milk, supplementation in Africa.

And. Yeah. So, so there's a long history of this. So but to take a step back, I find that most Americans are not protein deficient. If they're eating whole foods and you can eat, you can eat beans, you can eat broccoli, you.

But if you're concerned, check your protein levels. And for most people, it's not an issue that the issue unfortunately, is, in my opinion, is not do people get enough protein?

The vast majority of Americans get plenty of protein. The issue is not people don't get enough fiber, as humans were designed to get a 100g of fiber or more.

If you look at what our ancestors ate, it was 100g of fiber a day or more. The average American gets between 15 and 30g of fiber a day. And yeah, so that so I think I understand that people are concerned about it.

And that's what people hear on social media. It's just not based on on the science in my opinion. Yeah. Thank you. That's great. Thank you for clearing that up because I agree there's a lot of I even had to tell my son to stop.

He was overloading on protein. And I'm like, you have to pull back. There can be too much protein in a diet too. And so, you know, getting that balance so that is really helpful for people to hear that because I think we are told protein, protein, protein how you're getting a protein in there.

And that is, you know, something that we're hearing a lot. The other thing that is really important that you just said was fiber, because, you know, with the microbiome to be healthy, all we're just not getting enough fiber.

And I think most your I agree with you, most people just aren't. Well. And now we know the biochemical connection. If you have too much protein in your diet you will activate something called mTOR or which is this gene sensing system that that if you if you activate it, your biologic clock will get sped up and you won't live as long.

So so so now we know that yes, it is definitely possible to get too much protein. You'll age prematurely and it's it's tough on your kidneys. Yes. Yeah.

No thank you at for thank you for for telling us that that is really helpful information. And then when you're actually also looking at this, are you encouraging a fasting window in this, in that you know you're eating less calories.

But are you also encouraging a fasting period? I am and you know, it's interesting, the biochemistry of fasting, the effects on on your cells are almost identical to exercise.

And just like exercise is wherever you are, you know, you could probably do a little bit more, but don't. If you're not doing any, you know it's okay to start.

It's the same thing with fasting. If you're if you like, if you're completely new to fasting, you know, want to start by skipping breakfast, you know, and and and you know, with intermittent fasting, you're trying to restrict your eating to a window, say, between noon and 8 p.m.

every day. And and ensure, you know, the most restrictive would be to eat only one meal a day and I'm not recommending that for most people. But what I am saying is, wherever you are on the fasting journey, you know, we're we're we're not designed to be eating, you know, 24/7 even though in modern society, yeah, we we have refrigeration, we, we literally could eat all the time, but we're not designed that way.

Fasting and Longevity Strategies

We, you know, our ancestors didn't have access to food 24/7. So, so yeah. No, I'm a I'm a I'm a big fan of fasting. But but don't you have to figure out what works in your own lifestyle.

So there's no one size fits all type of fasting in my opinion. Yeah I agree. And what you can sustain too. I think that was a good point because it's like what you can actually do and sustain because if you, if you can't do it and you're not going to stick with it, then you're not getting the benefit to yeah.

Yeah, very, very true. And so now if, if someone's, you know, feels like, okay, I have this locked in and I'm, you know, trying the fasting, where would you go next.

Well, I think I, I think it depends where you are on the continuum. Because to me the ultimate type of fasting is water fasting, where, you know, a true north where I worked the people would water fast from, you know, a week up to 40 days under medical supervision, you know, being rounded on a couple, a couple times a day.

So to me, I saw the most transformation for MCAS and other chronic conditions being overweight, that that water

fasting was the most powerful. But I'm not saying that everyone needs to go out and water fast, right?

The second. Are there any nutrient specific or supplement specifics that are we're finding in that research for longevity. oh yes. Like which supplements if you're focused on like.

So I just want to start a basic you know if people are listening and they're like, okay, now I have my diet logged in, I'm fasting it. What would be some supplemental nutrients that are kind of important in that longevity aspect?

Yeah. So so I want give you two and and it's interesting both of these optimize the primitive biochemical pathways including mTOR that we talked about earlier.

And one of those is is nitric oxide, which you can get in supplement form or by eating lots of leafy greens and, and beets. So nitric oxide and then the other one is called NMN nicotinamide mono nucleotide.

And it's not M&Ms but NMN in both of those. So I recommend both of those nutrients or supplements, because they will reverse the biologic clock via the mTOR Ampk in the sirtuin pathways.

And again, we don't have to get into the biochemistry. But to my mind, it's just fascinating that, as as we get older, you know, beyond the age of 20 or 25, our levels of NAD go down and that's and man helps bring that, bring that up.

the same thing. Your nitric oxide levels go down, in your blood vessels, nitric oxide as a, as a gas that that will, open up, blood vessels, which is why I recommend supplementation.

Yeah. Yeah. Well. Thank you. Well, you've given us such helpful information today. Can you share with our listeners where they can find you? Sure. Probably the best way is my website, which is drjosh.com And my email address is just @drJosh.com So yeah great.

Well check out the website and go to connect with Dr. Josh. Thank you for being here today. Thanks, Meg. This this is a lot of fun. Great.