How To Reduce Toxic Chemicals From Your Life Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Background

Welcome to The Parkinson's Solutions Summit 2.0. I'm your host, Dr. Ken Sharlin. And today I have a very special guest heralding from my own hometown.

And it's her hometown, too, of course, Princeton, New Jersey Dr. Aly Cohen, who is triple board certified in rheumatology, internal medicine, and the American Board of Integrative Medicine Integrative Health, as well.

And she has so much information to share. This is she it's a very special interview, folks. So I want you to stick with it. the whole way through, you're going to learn a lot of information and solutions today.

Dr. Aly Cohen, thank you so much for joining us. Welcome to The Parkinson's Solutions Summit. Thank you, Dr. Sharlin, Ken, thank you for having me. I'm really excited to share some great stuff with your audience.

So thanks for having me. Absolutely. Well, I'm internal medicine, rheumatology, and you're a world class environmental health expert. I understand that not only do you write, you have several books and you teach, and you served as a legal expert as well.

so many things. How how did you make that jump from, you know, autoimmune diseases, rheumatology into environmental medicine? Yeah. This is, kind of an interesting question because I didn't know until I really put it all together how I got here.

but I'll just start with the very simple story. And I think a lot of your patients will and listeners will connect with this. my dog got sick. I was a young mom, two young kids, very busy, right into, you know, right out of, fellowship and training for rheumatology.

And I had a beautiful golden retriever who got sick and at a very young age, so about four and a half years of age, and he had what was called autoimmune hepatitis.

And so what ended up happening, which is unusual in dogs, it's unusual in the breed. and I was heartbroken because I'm a huge animal lover. And and long story short, I spent the better half of about two years trying to figure out what made this him sick.

What triggered his immune system, to work against himself, his liver. And it was an incredible journey. and I did it out of love and desperation. But I learned a lot about air quality, water quality, dog food, dog toys, pet toys.

I learned about plastics. It started to kind of move over into, what affects humans and also what regulations exist or no regulations exist in terms of the environmental chemicals that we're exposed to every single day.

So it was a great way to transition into, you know, I'm a rheumatologist, so I'm seeing autoimmune disease, but I'm seeing more and more of it. I'm seeing at a younger ages what could be the cause or association more so.

How Environmental Medicine Became the Focus

And, and of course, I never learned this in med school as we know now. And there's no real environmental health training or courses, very limited. Also, nutrition, as you probably shared with your audience.

But, so that's how this all started. And what I did was I started to try to figure out what was real and what wasn't. Reading the medical literature, learning from people I, I trust, mentors and, you know, it kind of all came together over the last couple of years, and I put it into books and I made it into a podcast, and I post on this Smart Human, which is my, my platform.

And that's really been where I am now. It's just keep shouting, on mountaintops, what we need to know and why we need to know it and what we can do as solutions.

That's a big part of what I do is what are the solutions. Well, I know folks are anxious to hear the solutions today, so why don't we set the stage? And I want to share with you, just a 32nd anecdote, because I'm a little bit of a news junkie, and I, as I was getting ready and sitting down and I was a few minutes early, so I pop on my news app on my, iMac here.

And one of the news articles is young women. Really children? are starting puberty at a especially early age. And not only that, but their periods aren't regular.

And of course, the litmus that's a litmus test, in a sense, for a whole variety of factors that have to do with our environment. Correct. And, and your, your reading, and this observation is actually very, very well, established in the medical literature, or it should be moving into the medical interest, certainly in the research world.

And one of the reasons that may be associated with that finding, and it is fact true that we are now young women and actually young boys. We we kind of leave them out of this.

But actually boys who go through puberty and young girls, have this vulnerable period of development, which we'll talk about in a second, that it makes exposures to many of the chemicals that are now in our products, in the food we eat and the, you know, drinking water.

But a lot of the products and I have two teenage boys, are basically loaded with chemicals, are allowed to be loaded with chemicals, that are not required to have any testing for their negative function, their toxicity.

their, it risks with pregnant women, which would be a vulnerable population as well. and these chemicals and I can't say all of them because there's about 95,000 that are currently circulating.

And all of our stuff, all of our products from cleaning products and food, chemicals and even chemicals like, you know, on textiles, you know, or food wrappers like grease proof chemicals and those kind of things.

But those 95,000 chemicals all have, a designated function. And they also do have a lot of science behind many of them in terms of classes. And the issue with many of them that was determined about 25 years ago was that they can act.

Many of them, as kind of mimic or is it hormones that are actually working in the human body? Okay. And and they're, they're designated from that time, which was so interesting.

They actually designated endocrine disrupting chemicals, even though at the very beginning of these findings that they work like hormones at infinitesimal levels, parts per million, parts per trillion.

but disruption could mean a lot of things. So they opened they kept this door open of endocrine disrupting chemicals when they named this kind of, class of chemicals that can do this, you know, affect insulin, which is a hormone growth and development, which is based on hormones, fertility, which is hormones, bone strength, bone development, bone growth, bone breakdown, which is hormones, brain development in utero, genitalia, which is hormones.

and certainly even the immune system now. But they came up with this designation of endocrine disrupting chemicals. And now we know of a variety of pathways.

in which in the way they work, to disrupt the human physiology. And it becomes a problem, really, because, we already have evolutionarily built hormones, hormones that have been in with this for 4.5 more million years or so.

Endocrine Disruptors and Early Puberty

And now you have these environmental chemicals that are making their way into our bodies, which you can measure through blood, urine, breast milk, and these chemicals, even cord blood, in newborns that, we know have this ability to disrupt how normal physiology works and that's an issue.

and in terms of young girls with puberty, we used to get women used to have their periods, or, or or menarche or the start of their pubertal changes. about 100 years ago, it used to be at age 16, 19.

Now we're talking as young as eight, nine years old. And in young African American women, it's even younger because many of those the personal care products that are marketed to young African American women, women of color, tend to have higher levels of those estrogenic markers.

So, so this is kind of where it all, you know, kind of comes full circle is that, there's now enough data to show that over time, the exposures to these low levels over time, you know, personal care products we use every day, but cumulatively, that is where we start to run into a lot of these physiologic problems.

Absolutely. And of course, we're going to talk about Parkinson's disease today, which really is kind of from a neurology perspective, been framed as the classic disease, which in which we recognize that environmental factors appear to play a major role in its genesis.

Yes, there is some genetics, some more than others. Younger onset park and more in person to the toxin genes and so forth. But the environment and with the sort of real rise in chemicals dumped into our environment, the mixture of chemicals, not just a single chemical, necessarily the ability of some of these chemicals to disrupt, hormones, which, you know, in which Parkinson's, for example, it's known that in men who have Parkinson's, at least that one pattern that's often seen is a sudden drop in testosterone, before the onset of symptoms of Parkinson's.

you know, it's really we're really in a crisis point. one of the things that you've pointed, to is regulatory failures as well in the United States. And I'm interested in, you know, how how did we get here?

How did we get here? Well, I would need an organic drink, alcohol, preferably to get through this major, area failure. is that, you know, listen, we lots of chemicals can do lots of things.

I always say that whether someone develops a disease of any kind is this dance between our genetics, our lifestyle, and how we live our lives and then our exposures as a separate entity, really, because those we can't always control.

And this kind of dance between these three areas is so important because we can control two out of those three things. and you could argue almost three out of three because we know that environment can alter the exposome, which are the proteins that allow genes to express themselves into a disease.

So there's a lot more control that we have, more than we think. and the reason we got into this pickle was because, you know, we are a country that likes to come up with good stuff, right?

We come up with compounds that create materials that make our lives easier. Right? The 1950s Monsanto, we we have chemicals going to make plastics, right.

So we could drop dishes and they won't break. We can wash them and not need to, you know, throw them away. So we're saving on resources. But the real pickle came when, you know, around World War Two.

And that's where we had this explosion, explosion of chemicals that were developed in many ways to help with soldiers overseas. Right. To help with, Plexiglas in fighter pilot, you know, airplanes, in the military, we had, you know, canned foods to help store food when we, when we were overseas and needed to manage wartime, and not an a really big component of that was the pesticides that were developed around those time that 1940s, 1950s, that was to protect many of the soldiers going into foreign lands that may experience malaria and other types of, of illness from, from exposure and infection.

So we had this kind of gate that opened wide open. And, you know, there was no regulation on many of these compounds that were created. and because of that, we have now kind of grandfathered in thousands of chemicals, but also and very specific to Parkinson's, pesticides and pesticides have been really well studied at this point to really show an association, again, not causation in humans, because it's very hard to make those in epidemiologic studies of humans because there's so many confounders.

People's lifestyles vary and genetics are different. But what we know from animal studies, which we can control, is that many of these chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, things that are used to kill, actually can work at the cellular level to have a lot of serious effects.

particularly in the brain. And because the mitochondria, which are so critical and valuable to the brain and to function and to ATP and energy, they're also very vulnerable.

And we now know that many of these chemicals, I can name a few, like, you know, Dana, I'm sorry. you know, paraquat and, grain of organophosphate, there's glyphosate.

Environmental Toxins and Parkinson's Risk

They all have a slightly potentially different pathway, but they do end up causing what we believe is cellular, problems, in a variety of ways, and certainly the mitochondria of the brain, which is so critical to function and longevity, and cognition, that turns out to be an area where these pesticides, take hold, and they're really neurotoxins.

Many of these pesticides were designed to be neurotoxins. That's how they work, right? Especially really. Right, exactly. And so to assume that they only work on the other living creatures and that we're somehow magically immune, to exposure.

I mean, I can tell you, you know, having gone through this process of eating junk food and having 20 different pesticides under my kitchen sink to kill, you know, we live on a farm.

So I had a bug spray, you know, and, and I had a wasp spray. And then I was, oh, you know, while I'm playing with the kids that, you know, I'm putting the little, you know, tick and flea tick, gel on the back in the between the shoulders of my dog, you know, to absorb and, like.

Yeah, maybe I'd wash my hands, hopefully I did. Maybe I got it on my hands. I don't know, there's an assumption that somewhere, somehow, we are being protected from the problems of chemicals in our products.

And that's how they got onto the shelves. And that's really what I'm here to sort of help patients, people, patients, listeners, to understand is that we don't have any protections.

So that's why we have to do it ourselves. And that's where I'll share some solutions. but yeah, it's a pickle. It's a pickle that's been, We can't put the genie back in the bottle.

chemicals keep coming out, and you said 95,000. We have about 15. you know, 100 new compounds per year, that get added to the market. We've really never taken off out of the, the US market, any enormous number.

We have about 11 chemicals that have been actually been removed from the US market, whereas in Europe it's upwards of, you know, 1500, particularly in cosmetics.

so we just have really no ability to do anything other than tell individuals how and where these chemicals are, what they do. And look, here are the solutions that you reduce them from getting into your body, reduce them.

That's probably the operative word. Because, you know, I have these sorts of conversations sometimes with my patients. And I say, look, you know, I, I'm a 21st century human being.

I like my air conditioning. I like the clothing that I get to wear, you know, the my everything, you know, about my home. we just moved. We built a home, and it was completed about a year ago, and we decided that we were going to stain our doors and our, the frame around the doors and the window at, you know, the frames of the windows.

And I remember the builders said that the painters, because they do the staining are coming in next week and no one will be here. But the painters, like all the carpenters, electricians, everyone is going to leave.

And I don't recommend you go in there. Well, my wife and I were so excited about the house and we just had to, you know, peek. And we go to the house and there's, you know, plastic draped and I sort of push it back.

And there are guys in there, no protective equipment at all. And it is the most toxic air that I have ever been exposed to in my life. And of course, when they're done and I'm horrified, you know, by the whole thing.

And we went back and they pull the plastic and me mean there is off gassing for a very long time, you know, we're opening windows and everything that we could to, to get as much of it out of the house.

It probably still is off gassing, even if you, you know, one can't smell it. But we are we are surrounded by this. And in some respects we embrace it.

We love it. Right. But how do we navigate our desire to live in this modern society with all really the blessings that it does bring, and yet keep ourselves as safe as possible?

Yeah. So you're you're really getting to the heart of it is that we love our stuff. I love coloring my hair. You know, I on a Ted talk, I made sure I, I had to throw myself under the bus.

But what I try to teach people and maybe this is just an excuse for my own behavior of wanting things or liking certain things, is that you kind of want to do this as a journey.

If you're interested in getting your bodies healthier, cleaner, getting some of these chemicals out, but also removing the ones that are supposedly coming in because you want to turn off the faucet.

You want your body, which is a sponge, to not absorb all of these chemicals. And so one of the ways that I approach this, and I teach high school and I teach college, I'm trying to get this into schools nationally, is look at your body as a sponge and think about what are the highest yield changes that make the most sense that aren't a stretch.

So when I start with this conversation, you really have to identify kind of by surveying your own experience, you know, what do you eat, what do you drink, what what worlds do you move through?

Work, home, artificial turf. My kids are sports players, as we were talking about. Right. So so they play lacrosse on on really pretty toxic turf, right.

And you know, I like to research it. I even have a podcast episode on it because there's there's multiple sides to that story too. But what we want to think about is what are the best ways that are not a stretch, that allow us to cut down the amount of chemicals.

If you were to test, which I don't do a lot of testing, you do, but I will assume that everyone, including myself, is is pretty much loaded. The idea is, take my word for it, that when you change these certain things in your life, the body burden, as they call it, of chemicals goes down and it's measurable.

Because I do this on myself. You know, Spurlock, I can't remember his first name, just passed away. Not, you know, not long ago. And he was responsible for the the documents on, Supersize Me.

where he did he did make, you know, he ate McDonald's three times a day, and he measured his levels, and they

were outrageous. Well, he just passed away.

And I think in honor of of his work, and he meant so much to the work I do, is I test for myself all the time. I make changes and test myself. I'd rather spend my own money and figure it out before doing it on other people.

Regulatory Failures and Chemical Exposure

But the idea is that when you change your diet from processed or ultra processed foods, which have tons of grandfathered in chemicals in the food industry that really have not been tested for safety, you remove those chemicals from your blood and urine.

Often when you get a water filter that's cost not prohibitive, like anyone and I can go through those choices when you filter your water, which there's a reason to do so, especially in the US, and especially because of Parkinson's disease, which I can talk about when you filter your water, those numbers go down in your water and they go down in your body.

and when you stop buying cosmetics and personal care products that we lather on and expect them to wash off without being absorbed through skin, you can see those numbers of and and the amounts of those chemicals go down in your urine and in your blood, and even in breast milk and even breast tissue.

By the way, there's a great fine needle biopsy study that was remarkable on breasts that showed changing our personal care products over 28 days changed the cellular, findings on breast biopsies, which women volunteered to do for this study, which is remarkable.

So there's just so many ways we can make a difference that aren't a stretch because there's many swaps now. You can get lots of swaps, like, you know, if you wanted M&Ms.

I love M&Ms, but there's actually swaps out there with none of the chemicals that are in Eminem's. If you wanted to find lip gloss or personal care products like, you know, body sprays, I tell the boys, you know, look them up.

Here's the app, here's the website. Let's do this class. And all these kids start whipping out their phones in their computers, and they're looking up the level of toxicity based on really good information.

Yes. And does it, you know, and then they choose better because we know exposures aren't necessarily going to slam dunk a disease and create a disease, but it certainly increases risk.

So one way to look at it, by the way, you know, the Eminem's probably several levels of this, because if you have that the cadmium in the lead that we worry about in the chocolate and then you have this sugar coating, which is just garbage anyway, but then it has red number five or whatever.

And so then we're dealing with all that stuff as well. But I was reminded as you were explaining this about, you know, you and I were talking about therapeutic lifestyle medicine and how powerful food is or how powerful sleep is.

And really, that stuff is the best medicine out there, my opinion at least. And you know a lot of folks, what supplement should I take and like? Well, each of these nutrients or compounds, antioxidants, they have a number of fairly specific roles that they play in the body.

but when you I'll say take the vitamin E, that's all you're getting, right? That's you're just getting vitamin E, but when you eat foods that are rich in that fat soluble vitamin, you're getting vitamin E, but you're getting all this other stuff too.

So I'm kind of hearing what you're saying is, look, we live in a very, contaminated environment. There's stuff that we have limited control over. You know, what happens in a public building, right?

Or maybe a park that we wish to take a wonderful stroll in. But on the other hand, there is that sort of low hanging fruit. The big stuff, what we put on our body, whether we choose organic versus non-organic and those can make a huge difference.

Yeah, exactly. So, so I kind of go in that direction that you're describing, you know, a birthday party, dinner, piece of cake. Some MM's here and there.

I'm not, you know, as my mom says, don't sweat the small stuff. Right. You know, I look at big ticket items. I think big ticket items are where to go, and they're not such a big, you know, for instance, let's talk food.

Okay? Like you just mentioned, organic versus non-organic. This is a really big, important topic because organic, USDA, organic happens to be the only regulation in the food system that actually has teeth, the only regulation that has teeth.

And when I say that, I mean that it actually prevents us from being exposed through food for thousands of pesticides, particularly important to this audience.

And fertilizer, chemicals and non-GMO is required. So you cannot have any genetically modified ingredients in those products. And this is for food. So personal care products, they they do a lot of whitewashing, greenwashing and really does USDA organic does not pertain to personal care, even though they might have one ingredient.

The rest could be junk. But in in the food system and even when we get, you know, my blueberries that came from Peru that were organic, right? They have to follow the same laws when they cross borders into United States.

And they are pretty much regulated in every way that you can imagine. The US market is for food. And what's important about USDA organic is that when you're not eating these microbes, I'm sorry, pesticides that can actually not only affect in and of their, their own selves of of the way they function in terms of endocrine disruption, perhaps brain, affects on the mitochondria, which we now know genetics sets up that stage.

But you also have knock off of good microbes in the gut, the gut microbiome which has been with us. Again, anthropology informs a lot of what I say it do.

we've been here a long time, and we've had a lot of good, healthy microbes of all kinds in our gut managing our health. And when you take in pesticide laden foods, you and certainly ultra processed chemicals that are, you know, food additives, chemicals, flavors, artificial, you're knocking off the good guys in the gut in this too, called the gut microbiome that we all have.

And that is another layer of harming the human body because the gut microbiome is very protective. And it also pulls nutrition from foods that we eat.

So it's kind of a twofold insult, right? You're you're you're the chemicals themselves will get into your bloodstream cause some effects.

Reducing Exposure Through Everyday Swaps

And then it also is killing off some of the good guys that are there to, to really protect the gut and keep it healthy. and USDA organic. Here's the swap. Here's the punch line.

Frozen organic foods are incredibly accessible in major big box, you know, big box supermarkets across the country. They're now making their own. No matter Shoprite, stop and shop, McCaffrey's Wegmans, what have you and frozen USD with the seal, USDA organic maintain all their nutrient value.

Okay, so they're flash frozen. I live next door. I live in a farm in new Jersey. We live next door to one of the biggest, spinach farmers now, not organic, and we have it out.

It's very funny, our conversations, but the way he processes his food, he taught me all about that. And basically as soon as that spinach is picked up, it is run right over to the icing.

Huge icing. places. you know, I don't know how to describe it, but they're they're pretty big and they are iced down and frozen immediately because it maintains not only the freshness, which is important for selling it, but also it maintains a lot of the nutrient value.

And that's very different than my blueberries that came from Peru that were organic. But they might have spent three weeks traveling, maybe were in a full down refrigerator for, you know, a week or 2 or 3.

Point being, our food system limits the nutrition that we get. And nutrition matters when it's when fighting the effects of these chemicals on our on our genetics.

So it's not just taking them away, which makes sense, but we have good alternatives. We have frozen organics are inexpensive. They're accessible. and what you just want to do is take whatever fruits and vegetables and they have wonderful ones and just transfer them to glass and stainless steel.

When you heat them, you don't want to do in bags steaming where the plastics would get into them if you're microwaving or heating them, but you would just take them a little, little extra work to transfer.

And you've got almost more nutritious food than a lot of our fresh, organic produce. So that's the hack I share. I think it's a really reasonable one.

And you don't have to use, you know, canned foods which have BPA and other kind of plasticizer on the interior of the can. so it just makes a lot of sense to me to just give that information.

Oh, yeah, I want to I want to kind of play devil's advocate, and I don't I certainly agree absolutely with everything that you've said, and I support that and want folks to follow this guidance.

But I was listening to a news story recently. You may have heard it. so this is sort of the argument from the other side, if you will. I, there was a, the way this was presented is that this is very disturbing, and I honestly forget which country this was in, but it was, like a third world developing country was either in Africa or in Asia.

but there is there is a genetically modified rice. I think they called it like yellow rice. It's not found in nature. It's genetically modified. But, it was working its way through the regulatory system and it got stopped.

The point was, is in this country, there's a tremendous amount of starvation and malnutrition, very common outside the United States. Right. Lots of places in Africa, lots of places in Asia where where food might not be just easily obtained.

and so, you know, the concept of genetic modification in this context is not just serving the Monsanto or whomever, right? It's that we can produce more food inexpensively and we can modify it in ways that delivers nutrients that are very commonly depleted in these populations.

So the news article is presented as this is a catastrophe as a result of these politicians voting down the production of this particular genetically modified rice that many children will die.

You know, that's a shock article, right? so how do we I mean, there's, you know, we always say that there's, you know, the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Right? And, is it that here we are in the United States and we're educated and we have some income? and we have, you know, Wegmans, as you said, in new Jersey and, you know, our Walmarts and Walmart carries more and more organic, but we can afford this, right?

how do how do we respond to all of that? well, I would want to. First of all, I would always say look for your sources,

look through the sources of that article.

And this is what I tell my teenagers, okay? Because they come up with some really interesting stuff. And we're always like, you know, where did that come from? What?

What TikTok video or God forbid, you know, what vetted newspaper. But what I want to say is that the argument for genetically modified products has been broken down.

because there are there's a couple ways of looking at this, I can't speak. This is not my area. Right? I'm not an agriculturalist, right? I don't want to speak outside my lane too much here, but my understanding and from doing some research for the two books that we had and I work with Frederick Boehm, Saul, who's an emeritus professor in reproductive neurobiology.

what we discovered is that the argument that we're going to somehow starve the world if we don't have genetically modified crops has never been born out to be true.

And one of the issues is, is that genetically modified crops typically require specific pesticides paired to these grains and to these seeds that were designed to be able to be sprayed on to those crops that are genetically modified.

And the seeds don't die, the plants don't die, but all of the, weeds around them die. So there's genetically modified so that they withstand pesticide spraying.

Right. what has come from that original intention, whether it was, you know, heartfelt and, altruistic or completely loaded by dollars, is that those crops now require multiple spraying and they have become resistant.

So genetically modified seeds have become more resistant to the actual pesticides. They were designed to be resistant to requiring more spraying. And what that actually ends up doing is ending up with products, food products, whether it's the grains themselves or whatever it turns, you know, comes from those grains like soy becomes hundreds of different products from soybeans.

Right. And we know that in the United States, 95% of soy products or products with soy that are not organic, by the way. Right? Right.

Organic Food, Water Filtration, and Practical Solutions

Are, you know, having these, these higher levels of pesticides when they're tested in those products, in the food we eat in cereals, for instance, you can look at environmental working groups, work on this where there's some very high levels of glyphosate, because there's multiple springs required for those genetically modified, grains, and not all genetically modified.

It's used across the board. But mind you, it is certainly is a problem with the genetically modified. So to go back to your question of ethics and sort of where are we now?

You know, we have so much that has exploded in terms of regenerative farming, in terms of understanding how certain plants, actually makes the soil healthier.

So if this is a nutritional argument, I think that there are certainly different avenues to approach when it comes to feeding back, you know, nutrition into the soil.

they have to be government programs. I mean, we can't fix an entire country with one farmer teaching them how to do this, but there are just so many forces behind the scenes that I would be very, curious to understand.

What are the forces in the United States? Yeah, we have an incredible food lobby. I mean, we've heard this so much, we have such a food lobby that, you know, healthy things are like ridiculous to get into school systems.

You know, ketchup is considered a vegetable. I mean, come on. I mean, so we have an incredible food lobby and a food system that has so much money. It's very hard for the the research voices, the people that are on the sides of academia to to really get this information in.

and so I find that you have to go to the source and figure out who's actually the loudest voice in the room. And it's typically some, you know, I'll talk about medicine is, you know, pharmaceutical industry.

I love medicines that I need. I have rheumatology patients. They need a lot of drugs, but they don't need them reflexively. But you'll never see education in medical schools, right, that have to do with prevention in any reasonable way.

Because guess what? They teach the symptoms and cure symptoms and cure or symptoms, drug symptoms, drug symptoms drug. And I've talked about this with you know, with deans of med schools, they are really geared towards symptoms when the horse has left the stable.

When you're sick and what to do about it. There's nothing really about the prevention side. And I could argue just like with the big food lobbies, you could argue that big Pharma really has their hand in another avenue of health and healing.

Yes, but I wonder if we could take a minute. I think folks are probably fairly convinced at this point that these environmental chemicals, metals, pesticides that, you know, other compounds we didn't touch on trichloroethylene, which is a big topic in Parkinson's, plays a major role in poisoning mitochondria and playing other, you know, having an impact on, on human biology, taking a person, you know, ultimately into a movement to swear like Parkinson's.

Okay, let's say I have Parkinson's, though, and removing these chemicals from my environment then actually improved my Parkinson's. I mean, can we get into the sort of therapeutic aspect of this as well?

I would say, yes. I have Parkinson's patients myself who have histories, whether they are knowingly exposed to pesticides. Many people don't have a recall of any exposed exposure to pesticides.

and by the way, pesticides include bug sprays in your house and they include, you know, anti-microbial. you know, tile, salt, sealants. Speaking of home renovations, there's a lot of antimicrobial chemicals that are not considered pesticides on marketing, but are actually pesticides that are infused in cooking boards, that are infused in cookware.

They're infused in a lot of places because we're apparently afraid of bugs as a culture, right? As a human species, we've been marketed to. So we are exposed more than I think most people think.

not just, you know, being migrant farmers, you know what I mean? Which is where we see a lot of this data, by the way, because they're the canaries in the coal mine. Right?

They're in those fields and they're managing these chemicals. Same with the guy down the street that spraying without a mask on, you know. But, you know, can you reverse a chronic disease such as Parkinson's?

And the answer, in my experience, is yes, you can help to slow the progression dramatically. I wouldn't necessarily go as far as to say the word reverse, because I think that's a pretty strong word, and I'm not a neurologist.

But I will tell you that when you take away and this goes for any illness of any kind that's been already diagnosed, when you take away the triggers, the the known compounds that we have seen and know and have in the medical literature that irritate the immune system to do anything from lupus to Parkinson's, to rheumatoid, fertility, whatever it may be, when you remove those triggers and then you add in nutrition, healthy sleep, as we know from anthropology and development, clean drinking water, like again, which is a very big exposure that we can really get right with very little money.

Not in plastic bottles, by the way. 200 plus check bottles, unless you're traveling, you know, unless, you know, here's the thing. I'm a realist. I'm not an alarmist.

I think that when you can create a water system in your own home for under $300, for under reverse osmosis, as an example, because pitchers are fine, you know, they're not great, but they certainly are better than nothing.

Frigerator doors, faucets, pitchers. But what I would love people to think about from a cost perspective is reverse osmosis. That's vetted because they're now as cheap as even a pitcher, that you have to spend all the money on the drop ins.

Right? Replacements. So when you take this human body and what I do with all my patients, including my own family and friends, when you take this person and you survey the exposures and you survey, you survey the life around them, the air they breathe, what they put on their skin, body, feminine care products.

I mean, I talk to these teenagers like girls. You're going to have your periods. For how long? How many tampons do you think that is? How many you should be thinking about sort of those exposures because it's a lifetime of exposures for something that could be swapped out to a cleaner version. Same with water.

Water is something we need so much of all the time. and if we don't get that right, then removing chemicals in other areas doesn't necessarily play as much of a role too.

Because again, you don't want to detox with clean water when it's not really that clean, you know. So these are swaps that really do make a difference.

And I've seen this clinically. I just want to tell you that I have seen this clinically, for all a remarkable number of auto immune diseases, Parkinson's being one of them.

Absolutely. and you know, and I, I personally I travel with a stainless steel bottle. So now not only do I not get the plastic right, but then I save a few dollars because how much is a bottle of water in an airport, right.

3 or 4 or $5 for a bottle of water. And guess what? Ken guess what else I post on things like being in the airport. And you know, you're faced with this whole wall of water to choose from to purchase, right?

If you don't bring your own, or you bring your own and you just fill up somewhere else.

Genetically Modified Foods and Food Policy Debate

But the idea is that when you pick up a water bottle and look at the ingredients, who looks at ingredients of water, right? You don't think there's anything in there but water?

It tells you how that water was cleaned, say purified by distillation. Municipal tap. Can you believe that? They can resell? Simple tap. I saw that once, right?

Or purified by reverse osmosis. So, yes, you have choices. Even though you're in a place where you have to choose bottled water, you can certainly have that one extra layer of making a choice.

and I don't think people think about that. So yeah, there's opportunities all over the place to make better choices that don't change. You know, your finances.

Dr. Aly Cohen, I wonder if you would hold up your book so folks can see the cover. this is the guide to healthy living in a chemical world. And and, get a copy.

Get a copy, everyone. you also have another, you did a TED talk about how to protect your kids from toxic chemicals. So it really starts at a very young age.

And I know we we don't really have time to get too much into it, but I was thinking about the whole Cheerios story and, you know, giving the the toddlers, the young kids those finger foods and how laced with glyphosate, you know, that simple oat city cheerio is.

So we we really have a problem and we have to start young. We really need to start before conception and during pregnancy and think about what we're what we're exposing.

our, our children to. if, folks do want to learn more about what you do, you have so many channels, so many avenues. Can you share just a few. Yeah, absolutely.

So, again, out of my own work and frustration and sadness about my dog, who did end up passing away, but he is sort of the, the, you know, the reason I keep going, is really to share with as many people as possible.

So I started a platform called The Smart Human. again, tying in anthropology that we're all human, we all bleed red blood. You know, it's really to think about us as anthropological beings and that, you know, that's how I post.

I want people to know the problem. I want them to know the solution. I want perspective on where we are in this modern age and how to manage this in a reasonable way, you know, and be empowered to make changes that are not complicated.

And having been someone who came from, you know, Cheez Whiz or Oreos and DIY Dr. Pepper, if I can do it, anyone can do it. and so, yeah, so the book is very helpful.

The Smart Human is my platform on TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook is really quite good. And then, I work hard at it. I do it myself. and then I have a podcast that I interview some of the best researchers in environmental health and endocrine disruption, health and wellness, but really trying to get people to think and environmentally environmental exposures, how this affects, immune system disorders as well as endocrine disorders.

And I have a new book coming out, on that topic, not just endocrine disruption, but understanding how environmental chemicals affects the actual diseases that I've been dealing with for 20 years, which is about diseases from an immune system perspective.

so it's just really important to just know how easy it is to move through this. It's a journey for everybody. there's no regrets. If you have a child or you're sick yourself or you got cancer.

I want people to realize this is not your fault. This is the system's fault. We just need to figure out our way out of it. And that's what I want to really help people do. Yeah.

Well, Dr. Aly Cohen, thank you so much for joining us. The Parkinson's Solution Summit from my old stomping ground in Princeton, New Jersey. I'm going to say Go Tigers.

we do not cross paths growing up, but, but, I'm an old. But when you come back, we'll have a drink. That's okay. We're all good here. And I'm waiting for me to come back.

So when you head home, you know, let me know. I'll give you a call. All right. Northeast. Thanks for having me. I really appreciate it, Dr. Sharlin. And thank everyone out there.

I really wish everyone well. Thank you so much. Bye bye. Now.