Manageable Skills To Clean Up Your Life Transcript

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Introduction and Vivian Chenu2019s background

– Welcome to this episode of the Environmental Toxicants Autoimmunity and Chronic Diseases Summit. I'm your host, Wendie Trubow, MD, MBA and I'm super, super excited to be speaking with Dr. Vivian Chen.

Today. She is a medical doctor with 15 years of clinical experience. She's board certified through the U K and the United Kingdom in both internal medicine and family practice.

And she now lives in California with her family. We're going to talk about this today. Her world turned upside down when her newborn daughter was hospitalized shortly after birth. And the end result was that she's now a coach who focuses on root causes of diseases and as an expert in toxin, so near and dear to my heart. Welcome, Vivian.

I'm so excited to have this conversation with you. Is there anything you want to add before we dive in? – No, thank you so much for the very warm and kind of introduction, Wendie. It was amazing to meet you in person in Arizona and you know, you're just like me an MD with an interest in toxicity.

So, yeah, we're definitely singing from the same hymn sheet. – Yeah, I mean, I can only imagine what it was like. I had a premie, I had a severely growth restricted premium for my first kid.

And I always feel like the first one you do all the experimentation on and then you get down to brass tacks later. So I can imagine being a new parent and your child gets hospitalized at eight weeks.

Right. – Right. Yeah, there's nothing like it. I mean, as you mentioned, I practiced for many, many years as a conventional N D and that's what I truly loved and you know, I love science and, you know, big proponent of science and using science as a guiding light to help my patients.

But there was this whole world that we have, you know, information knowledge that I didn't gain from medical school that during my practice, I was starting to see like, hey, I don't know that I'm truly helping get to the root cause of my patients problems. I was good at prescribing pills that help them relieve symptoms. Um but they kept coming back and there was no resolution that they just kept coming back for more pills and more pills.

Um But you know, as a busy doctor, you kind of just put that to the side, right? Because you just focus on your patients and who's in front of you. Um And it really wasn't until my whole world turned upside down with my daughter that really gave me that final push, to look into all the other things that we're both really passionate about it.

– It's personal. Right.

Newborn feeding crisis and cowu2019s milk protein allergy

It's like this, you have to learn because it's now life or death and it's personal for your child. – Exactly. And I feel like a lot of mds that I've come across who's open minded, and practices more integrative lee, have their own health issues or have a family member of friends who have opened their eyes to the fact that conventional medicine is one part of the two box. But there's so many more things that – I remember.

One of the podcasts I was on someone said was your, did you mess become your message? I was like, oh my God. Yes. So walk me through this. You have a newborn.

She stops eating and you freak, right? Were you nursing? Were you not nursing? Right? – Yeah, I was breastfeeding her. And from about four weeks she started fussing, she latched on, come off and arch her back and that, you know, typical presentation of reflux. And so her doctor put her on Reflux medication. One after another,

we got to maximum dose of Dean and Don paradigm and she still wasn't better.

In fact, she got worse. She stopped feeding but she just refused to feed. So the minute she saw my boobs, she would cry. Yeah, it was. And she got so dehydrated that her pediatrician just said okay, she needs to come in and needs to be cheap because she was losing weight.

So took her into the hospital. And I will remember that her struggle as they pushed, pushed that N G tube down forever. And I'm sure you remember, you know those memories of your child struggling will never leave you, right? And yeah, so that was the moment I said to myself, okay, something is not adding up. Why is it that I can't help the one person I love the most with all that medical training behind me.

Why is it that her pediatrician, pediatric team couldn't help her? So I started digging into the research um when on public dug into the textbooks and I I realized that she had this really rare presentation of health milk protein allergy. So the cow's milk protein that I was ingesting was passing through my breast milk into her and because she was allergic to it, it was causing irritation and inflammation in her gullet, the esophagus. And so every time she fed, she was in pain and she associated pain with feeding and my boob. And that's why she completely refused to feed.

Now, at the time, her pediatrician and she told me she had a behavioral disorder, wanted me to babies don't have disorders, Right? eight weeks. That just really, yeah, that did not sit comfortably with me.

So um I presented this paper that I found from 1983 that described cow's milk protein allergy to her pediatric team. And they eventually agreed to switch her milk over to near Kate.

And then after a week she was better. So, that left me then with the question, like, well, wait a minute, how come she has this allergy? Right? I don't have any allergy.

I don't have the genetic predisposition. And that led me down the rabbit hole of environmental toxins, you know, the immune system and how our environment can interact without jeans too then Lead to different diseases.

– So, were you ultimately able to restart breastfeeding? Just by eliminating dairy and cosmo? – I tried. But honestly, I was so traumatized by her being hospital.

I just, I wasn't confident I was told and, you know, this is what it has been shown is that it takes 3-4 weeks for the cow's milk protein to leave breast milk.

So I was pumping for a while. But then the milk supply just wasn't keeping up. And then when I actually went back to like thinking about feeding her breast, feeding her again. Just the flashbacks of the N G tube.

All of that stopped me. So I was like, you know what? She's at a good place. She's driving, let me just do this and, and carry on with that. So I never could go back um to breastfeeding, but at least she's thriving now and she's outgrown her allergies.

Thankfully, – How old is she, now? – She's 14. Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, her pediatrician said because at the time she was also diagnosed with a peanut allergy. So, after we realized it was a calf's milk protein allergy, the allergy tested her and she had I G antibodies to peanuts eggs. And I was told that she would never outgrow that she was very unlikely to outgrow that because it's I g, but she still managed to outgrow it. So I'm very grateful for that.

– You healed her gut, right?

Discovering environmental toxins and immune effects

I mean, she's, she's healthy from the inside out. So that's gonna be the, we can't promise that you'll stop having anaphylaxis, but you should expect that it gets better.

– Yeah. And also always work with the doctor, right? I worked with her pediatric allergist and, you know, they were testing her and then eventually showed, they showed that she outgrew it. I didn't just give her peanuts.

– So what was the segue for you when you obviously food is foundational? So everyone has to eat and you're diving into this and you're really in it. How did you then go from, from food? Which is, I guess one type of environmental toxin to full on environmental toxins.

How do you make that bridge? – Oh, it was, it was definitely progress, you know, kind of slow progress over years and years. I started to realize that my symptoms were due to environmental toxins.

So I had come across this paper that talked about how mercury tipped the immune system more towards the allergenic arm. And then I thought, hang on a minute. I have multiple amalgams in my mouth.

And, you know, when in this study showing that mercury does pass through to the, through the placenta, to the unborn child. And so then I started wondering whether what was in my body was, you know, moving to, to her and that was tipping her immune system that way.

So that was kind of the lead into this whole rabbit hole down the environmental toxins, which then, you know, I realized that salads, for example, also can tip our immune system and has been associated with allergies and asthma and asthma.

There was just, yeah, just, it was kind of one thing at a time, one paper a time and then slowly the picture added up and, and then I thought goodness, there's 85,000 of these chemicals registered with the A P A for use. Most of them haven't been tested for safety.

They could be doing all of that stuff to our immune system, to our gut health, to our brain health. We don't even know. Right. And I just feel like the studies were so slow to, to come into light that I had to start doing something just to clean up my environment.

So that's what I did. That was the first thing I did. Just to clean up our environment. But of course, you know, with 85,000 chemicals around us, it's impossible to avoid. Right. There's even glyphosate in rainwater now.

So I think we have to take a very pragmatic approach and say Yes, we can do up there to avoid toxins where we can. But we also have to support our detox organs and nourish our bodies so that it can eliminate these toxins for us because we do have these detox organs – Before we go into that, I want to talk about for people because it's, it's easy as a human to think. Oh, well, the government's protecting us and if it was really bad, they would not allowed on the market.

But the, but you said the magic word, which is glyphosate, which is one of my personal pet peeves. So, and I present on it and I'm like a maniac about glyphosate and the, and my research on, what's that?

Right? It's crazy. So, one of the things that's so struck and jumped out at me was that the environmental protection Agency which has recently been weakened from doing its job around protecting us, hasn't outlawed or prohibited any substance since 1984.

So almost 40 years, that was the last time that the E P A actually said okay, this is so harmful. We don't want it to be used, but that's not because there's nothing out there.

It's because they don't have the bandwidth to evaluate. I think they can evaluate like 400 products a year. And as you said, thousands of products on the market.

– Right. It's really frustrating and makes me feel really angry actually. And coming from the UK to I now live in California. But when we first moved, I realized that the same product at the exact same product that was sold in the U K has a different ingredient list two products here, Doritos, for example, has artificial color in it.

And in the UK doesn't and you know, in the eu 1100 chemicals are banned for use in cosmetics. And I think only nine or 10 here in the U S. So I think in the Eu they take a precautionary principle, which is that if we don't know, then we don't allow something to be in the product.

Reducing exposures at home: air, water, and cleaning products

Whereas here it's kind of like, well, the owners is on the consumer to prove that it harmed them before we'll ban it from use. And that's a big difference, which means that unfortunately, and we shouldn't have to do this.

But as consumers, we now have to look after our own um health, right? Because there is no, like you said, there is no effective protection in place for us that looks out for us, – No and I think it's important to think about as you're approaching your own health.

There's big things you can do like your food, your sleep, you're sweating your, your mental detox. Your trauma PTSD. But then you also want to think about your body is like a rain barrel.

So every stressor you put in starts to add up and that the the valve to release all the pressures at the top, not the bottom. So you're gonna start overflowing if you have enough exposure. So the goal is peel off your exposures, pick the big stuff and see if you can keep your rain barrel from filling up because each of us is gonna react. And I have a very small rain barrel and I'm going to react at us at a much quicker pace than someone who's I call them strong like an ox. You know, if you're strongly nothing.

– Yeah, we are the canaries in the coal mine because we have a lower detox capacity to eat. But you know, if we can still thrive, then anyone can. – Yeah. And I would say both of us have done a really good job at cleaning it up and you're right, it's not perfect.

It's about mitigating risk and choosing a better option, but it's never going to be perfect because perfection will make you nuts. So talk to me, talk to me about, I think there's a couple of things.

It's not only have a lower toxic burden, which we should talk about next. But then also after that, we want to talk about what are the things people can do to improve their innate body, body's ability to detox. But let's handle.

What are the low hanging fruit that you talk to people about not doing or not eating or not putting on their body or in their body first? – Yeah, I think if you come at it as looking at, your life and looking at your exposures, like what, what are the biggest things that come into your body or come into contact with your body? It's going to be a rand water, right? Hopefully it is water too, but we breathe around 11,000 liters of a day and that's an invisible exposure people don't talk about and you know, hopefully we're drinking a good amount of water per day to.

And then we're eating food. So those are our three biggest roots of ingestion of toxins, toxicants or toxins. So let's think about air. If we can reduce the amount of toxicants we put out into our air.

That helps, right. So what are the things we can do there if you look around your house, things like your air freshness that you're spraying into the air candles that's releasing fumes, you know, carcinogens like benzene toluene going into the air. Those are the things that pollute your air that if you stopped doing, you can dramatically improve the quality of air that you're breathing in that 11,000. And then you know – Hold on that you have control over.

I think that when you talk to people about their air quality. Most people, like, I don't have control over that. But you do. You really do. – You really do? Yeah. And then the E P A has shown that indoor air quality can be 2 to 5 times worse than outdoor. And that's because of the different cleaning products, air fresheners and things we put into the, so opening your window, these are three things that we can do and they're not hard, they don't cost anything, open your windows as long as there's no wildfire or anything else going on outside. And then when your finances allow, you can invest in an air purifier. Right.

So those are, that, those are the big things for your indoor air and then – Talk about that for a second. I had a

patient sitting in my office just the other day and she said, I don't know, I wake up and I'm all stuffy and I am headache.

E and I'm sort of sussing through. You have seasonal allergies. No. Did you change your bed? No. Did you change your bedding? No. Did you move? Yes. Did you do any construction? Yes. Okay.

Did you use V O C free paint? No, you have to call me before you do these things. So even if you're looking at painting something doing construction, you really want to make sure you're not adding to it because the V O C s of the paint are super toxic. You don't want your painter exposed to that, but then you don't want to live in that either, right? – Yeah.

Yeah, that's a really great example, really good example. But you know, there's also things like Cooking, right? Cooking releases PM 2.5 particles. These are really, really tiny particles that can we breathe in and they can travel in our body, you know, in the blood and cause inflammation. It's been associated with cardiovascular risk and you know, respiratory diseases. So yeah, like when you're cooking open windows, usual extractor hood, those are some quite low hanging through approaches.

– It's funny in a 1989 study in Massachusetts go, Boston said that one in six deaths were actually due to either air quality or poor air quality or poor water quality.

And if you think about one in six people dies because their air water isn't good. And we have control over this narrative. Obviously, if you live near a highway, you don't have control over that. But what's in your house?

You have control over. – Exactly. Exactly. And it's good to feel empowered and that you are taking positive action. And these even small steps like opening a window using extractor hood can make a big difference to your health over time.

I have clients who, who say as soon as they switch their household cleaning product, just that one step meant that the coughing, the sneezing, that watery eyes went away.

So yeah, these things, it can really make a difference. – And it's actually the thing that I was thinking about today was take your shoes off when you walk in the house. And the reason is because I hurt myself and I'm wearing a boot. And so now I have to wear a shoe and a boot in the house and I thought I have to wash my shoe. As soon as I come in the house, I'm changing to a shoe that I only wear in the house.

But then I wash the bottom of the boot. Take off your shoes when you go in your house because when you walk all over your house with your shoes, you track all that chemicals and toxins and pesticides into your house and then guess what?

You breed them, take your shoes off again free. I love free solutions. – Exactly. We start their right to do those things first. And then you can move on to your air filter once you have the money.

Detox support: stress, digestion, and bowel movements

– So, talk to me about what are some of the things that people can do to improve their, their? So we talked about don't fill up the pump and there's thousands of more things you can do. But this is a good start.

Right. Then what are the things that people can do to empty the pump to get rid of their toxins? Because, yeah, I love that part. – Yeah. So I think the top, the biggest thing is going to be. Well, for me, I think it's actually to reduce your stress level. First of all I know it's really hard to do, especially in this environment, current environment.

But when we're stressed, detoxification is down regulated, right? So, you know, when we're in that flight or fight mode, sympathetic, dominant mode, that the nervous system thinks that we are faced with a saber toothed tiger, our life is in danger.

Detoxification is kind of the last thing that it wants to do, the body wants to do. So it down regulates all the detox pathways. And so, you know, you may be pushing detox with like supplements.

A lot of people jump straight into detox supplements when they think about detox protocols. But when, if you're not nourishing your body with the right nutrients, sleeping enough, you know, moving your body, um de stressing or managing your stress, then the Suttons really don't do very much at all. So I like to tackle the brain first, I go down from the brain and then the next place I go to is to make sure that they're pooping because that that's one of the main exit pathways for toxins right in the body.

And if you're not pooping, the toxins are not coming out. So you could be pushing liver detoxification, but the toxins won't come out if you're not pooping. – I love this.

You said the word you said the magic word. What first was glyphosate and the second was poop like another hot button. But I think I'm always saying to my patients let's do a stool test because we want to know, you know, forget, forget environmental toxins. As a female, you're going to get rid of your toxins through your poop.

They go through phase one and phase two and your liver, you make them more toxic than you bind them. And guess what, then you put them into your intestines. And if, if they get d conjugated disconnected, you now have this previously even more toxic form of hormones and guess what? It's now no longer water soluble.

You put it back in your bloodstream and you start the system all over again. So you increase the burden on the system. So you want to make sure you're actually pooping it out and not just trying to poop it out.

Constipation is a huge problem with that. – Yeah. So I have, I'm sure you probably see this as well. Clients come to me on dim as a supplement to lower estrogen, right? They're saying that estrogen dominant too much estrogen in the body. I'm going to take them to lower that.

But that's kind of like a band aid almost because you've got to look at why your, your eastern level so high, probably because you're not getting rid of it.

Like you said, why don't we look at if you're pooping if your gut health is optimized first and lo and behold, if we work on that and supporting the gut and the liver, you don't need them anymore. Right. So, yeah, – I used to have a fibroid.

I mean, it was documented in one of my pregnancies. I said you have four centimeter by two centimeter fibroid. I'm like, interesting. I don't want it to get any bigger.

It was on the outside of the uterus. And by the fourth kid, I mean, it was like pregnant and nursing for a really long time. And by the fourth kid though, that fibroid was a lot smaller because I had started the functional medicine work and worked on the estrogen dominance and fibroids are a sign of estrogen. So I think it's just fascinating.

So I want to go back to the distressing part because I'm always into free and the thing that you can do that super impactful that you alluded to, but I really want to drill into with people is breathe out longer than in, which is a form of meditation because you're gonna activate parasympathetic and quiet down the sympathetic.

– Yeah, absolutely. That's a, you know, you can do that when you're driving, when you're waiting to check out the grocery store. You don't have to close your eyes to meditate.

You can just, you can change the length of your breath and that can put your nervous system back into balance again. It's so powerful. – Yeah, I just doing heart math which is monitoring the coherence between my heart and I'm pointing to my ear because you clip it on your ear and then it connects to your phone and you get immediate feedback. Are you coherent incoherent?

You're incoherent, but you can get really immediate feedback. And I'm very goal driven. So I like, oh, I'm getting immediate feedback on what's happening and it's lovely, – So powerful people.

You, it's so powerful to see that immediate feedback. I think so. Yeah, I really like, – Yes. Now what things are you, what resources do you point other than your website, which we'll talk about shortly. What are the resources that you point people to when they're starting out with their detox process?

– Oh, with the detox process? That's kind of hard. I mean, I think reducing toxins, there are many reliable resources out there now, like the environmental working group. They do a lot of great work in this area.

I mean, the they get a lot of criticism because the vetting is difficult, right? Vetting a product is very nuanced and it's difficult, it's difficult to do to get it, right?

But they're doing amazing work and raising awareness. Think Think Dirty is an app that's great for vetting products. But I honestly don't know that. I mean I see detox is a very different process to most of the protocols out there because a lot of them just kind of focus on supplements, right? It's all about take this for seven days to take this for 14, days and then you can detox once a year.

Alcohol, bedding, and fiber for daily detox

But I think detox should be a daily thing that we do because our, our detox organs are working 24/7. It's not like they work once a year. And if we're taking out trash from our house every day, why are we leaving the trash in the house for a whole year and then taking it out once a year?

Right. – Right. – So it's the three things that we are talking about right now that you can do every day to keep up with the detoxification processes in the body. – You have an asked about, you haven't mentioned anything about alcohol. Is that on purpose or just because we've been ranging far and wide? – Oh, it's such a broad topic.

But yeah. And also I feel like most of our audiences are not, I mean, maybe I'm making the assumption incorrectly, but most of them are kind of aware of alcohol ready, but maybe I'm wrong. But yeah, alcohol is a huge, it's a huge one. – Yeah. And I mean, I think we should drill into it that it is straight up a toxin and your liver has to deal with it. And then on top of it, if you're dealing with an acute toxin because alcohol can kill you, you're not dealing with all the other toxins that you would hopefully be dealing with to get them out.

– Definitely. Yes. Yeah, definitely. I don't actually drink maybe like a few times a year I would drink because of that reason. I don't, I find very few detox doctors and specialists drink alcohol. Yeah. So it's the same.

Yeah, I think that's a really, really great point and I think with goes hand in hand with stress as well. Right. Because the more stressed out people are, I think that alcohol consumption over the pandemic has increased significantly.

So that's a really great point that you're making. – And I think that's important for women to hear that as women, we are not constitutionally Set up to process alcohol the same way men are.

So, you know, you go out with your friend, your spouse, your significant other and they have a drink and you have a drink and you match them and they have a drink and you have a drink and so you're now at 2-3 drinks, men process alcohol much faster than we do.

And so now now you're trying to keep up with them, but you're like way behind the eight ball. So particularly for women, like 1-2 at any given setting for me would be the recommended max, but that would be 1-2 like a week maybe, which is super unpopular.

– Yeah, it's super unpopular. But you know what, now that I believe it or not, I used to really drink quite a bit, especially during my medical school days, people I knew all of this.

I don't know what it's like here at medical school here, but medics in the UK are known to be able to drink and it's kind of like the badge of honor to, to drink each other under the table. So I used to drink quite a bit and I didn't realize that that actually contributed to my estrogen dominant symptoms because like you said, if the liver has to deal with alcohol and it is the foremost toxin, it will try to break down first, right? Then everything else gets pushed

to the backburner. So then your estrogen breakdown is pushed back and then of course, then you're gonna end up with more estrogen because your liver is not breaking it down. Yeah.

– Yeah, I feel like we've started to scratch the surface of detox and we could do this for a long time and we could do this for many hours because this is both of our passion place.

What would be? Let me think about this? We've talked about stress, we've talked about alcohol, we've talked about food, we've talked about air quality water quality. You haven't mentioned bedding, bedding.

So because your mattress is often treated with flame returns, which is an endocrine disruptor. – Yes. Yeah. Yeah. And actually, you know, we, we go at it from a step by step way, right. So, yeah, and I think sleep is really important.

It's something we do hopefully for eight hours a day. So, what you're sleeping on really definitely matters. The only thing is that it is a, um, a deterrent. The price tag for a lot of these mattresses that are non toxic is a deterrent for a lot of people.

Like I myself had to save up for a while in order to be able to change all of our mattresses in the home. So, yes, I think it is important, but first I would probably change the pillow, right.

So stop using your memory foam pillows. And think about, you know, more natural. I really like, um, the kind of more natural latex based pillows. And then you want to think about your pillowcase as well, right? So organic cotton is my preference.

So because that kind of the, the nearest to your face and your nose and where you're breathing it in and then when my finances will out, then, yeah, I think changing to a non toxic mattress that doesn't have the flame retardant.

It's a great idea. – I always say to people this is a journey, not a, not a destination. So you're never going to be done. And if you just bought a mattress, don't go buy another one.

It's just when you're in the market for a mattress, make sure that your upgrade just like if you're in the market to do construction on your house or get a car.

My husband just got a car and I said you need a filter in your car and he's like, really doesn't smell that much. I'm like, but it smells new and – I hate the smell and yeah, I actually put it out in the sun with the windows open to kind of let it expedite the V O C coming out. But, yeah, my husband thinks I'm mad.

– I would almost keep because you live in California. So I would almost keep the windows closed and bake it for like a week and then keep the windows open and let it air helps.

This is really cool. Is there anything else that you would recommend for people? I mean, what's your favorite beauty product? – I think that if we're talking about detox, I think probably one of the main things that I want people to take away is to prioritize fiber in the diet because I think that most Americans don't get enough fiber in the diet and we talked about proof and that's kind of linked, more fiber helps you prove better. But it also is a binder, a natural binder for toxins, right? So the more fiber there is in your gut when the liver sends the broken down toxins into the gut to be expo, weld the fibers holding onto those toxins and making sure that they leave your body rather than being re absorbed. Like you said, earlier about with the estrogen.

So I think if there's just one thing that I want to kind of leave your audience with, which it will be to email plants, get more plants in your diet, get more fiber in.

– Really well said, Vivian, thank you. Where can people find you? Because I know they're going to want to find you. – Thank you very much. So, I have a website, it's www. Platefulhealth.com. But since we're talking about detox, actually have a quiz that helps people see whether they're detox pathways may be open or blocked. And so the quiz is join detox right dot com for slash quiz. So join detox right dot com for slash quiz.

Also on social media, on Instagram, my handle is at Plate for Health. So that's about P L A T E F U L dot H E A L T H. – Love it. Vivian. Thank you for joining us.

Like this is just scratching the surface but also such critical information for people to know. So this is like one of my favorite conversations to have because everyone listening has the power to make this difference.

– Absolutely. – Thank you. Thank you for joining us for this episode of the Environmental Toxicants Autoimmunity and Chronic Diseases Summit. I'm Wendie Trubow.

And our guest today was Vivian Chen and you can find her at Plateful Health, Platefulhealth.comon Instagram and join Detox, right dot com forward slash quiz.

Vivian, thank you for being here. – Thank you so much, Wendie and thank you so much for the important work you're doing.