Qigong, Healing, and Interconnection

We're living in an age of great disconnection. So just the very premise of Qigong is that as you heal yourself, you healed those around you. It has a reciprocal nature built into its foundation.

And as you're building and becoming aware of your own energetic imprint and you kind of tapping into what I see as the interconnected web of humanity, these are the fundamental foundational thoughts of Qigong and creating that awareness.

internally, I believe, is a step forward for humanity, a steps forward to repair for both the people and the planet. We have to know it inside before we can really understand it outside.

Hello and welcome back to the Evolution of Medicine podcast. We are shooting live at the Institute for Functional Medicine's annual international conference.

we are here in San Diego and we're speaking to speakers, leaders, innovators who are taking functional medicine to places that it hasn't been and integrating functional medicines with all kinds of other things that you're going to hear about today, something that is close to my heart.

Thank you. Excited to be here. Thank for inviting me. No problem. Tell me a little bit about your journey to being here, to speaking, and how this all happened.

From Dance to Functional Medicine

Well, my journey, how I got interested in functional medicine, for 22 years I was a professional dancer and choreographer and I worked with people with disabilities, particularly started out working with the blind and visually impaired.

through my work with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which is where I was training and working as a professional dancer. And I saw the miracle, I see the transformation happen where people who were considered medically fragile and people were who considered outside of the experience of arts community had this transformation, this ability to change, to heal through movement, through the arts.

So bringing those creative elements in and then bringing that journey where they were self-expressing. So, for example, I would tell someone I want you to drop to all fours.

Well, if you've never seen that, you might think as a sighted person I'm going to get down on my hands and knees, right? Drop to All Fours, quadruped.

But a lot of times I'd have people who had never see that. They would just put four fingers down. So I started, whoa, that's not what I meant. But wouldn't that be interesting in the choreo, at that moment, in that gesture?

And I start to see these transformative ways and these ideas in this new perspective. And for the person that was generating it, this kind of excitement about, oh, look what i just did.

someone took my idea and they liked my ideas. And then they started feeling better about themselves and getting more and more creative. From that moment on, I didn't know it was called functional medicine, or lifestyle medicine or any of these things, but I knew there was a transformative moments and strings of transformative moments that happens through the arts, happens to creativity, it happens sort of movement.

Yeah. It's amazing. So what's the title of your talk here? What are you going to be talking about and how did that

come together? All right. I am going be to talking Chigong as systems medicine, mapping it to the seven nodes of functional medicine.

Amazing. I'm really excited about that topic for a couple reasons. There's a few threads I want to pull on. One is there was a podcast actually that my friend Andrea Nakayama did for years, which was mapping things onto the matrix.

And it was really cool podcast. Like I did one once on loneliness and social isolation. But I always love those podcasts because I think it gives people a much richer understanding of the nodes of The Matrix.

Also, my business partner, Gabe Hoffman, who I started The Evolution of Medicine with, in his latter years, he got really into Qigong.

Qigong as Systems Medicine

He had a guy who taught him, was in Santa Fe. We all went down there. I did a long weekend there, And in the days before his death or the months before death, we talked a lot about the role that Qigong could have in building this foundational layer that was necessary for healing.

And even now, more recently, my wife is sort of like, hey, really build a daily Qigong practice in our garden as 45 year olds. So yeah, I'd love to just get a little flavor of why you think or how it maps onto the matrix and why do you this is crucial for our society to adopt.

Well, we're living in an age of great disconnection. So just the very premise of Qigong is that as you heal yourself, you heel those around you. It has a reciprocal nature built into its foundation.

As you're building and becoming aware of your own energetic imprint, and how that connects, and you're kind of tapping into what I see as the interconnected web of humanity.

These are the fundamental foundational thoughts of Qigong as a practice. And creating that awareness internally, I believe is a step forward for humanity, a steps forward to repair for both the people and the planet.

We have to know it inside before we can really understand it outside. And I think this is moment in our time in history where this becomes a vital practice, vitally necessary to either help us evolve or going the other way, devolving.

I love everything you said there. I feel that when I see a picture of groups of people doing qigong, you know, I realize there's some sort of birthright that I'm not having access to and that like our whole culture is missing out on the movement in groups.

It's profound to see, it's almost like a remembering that this should be something that could happen. I'm extremely interested in what it is going to take to reweave the social fabric.

And so I would love to get your take on that because it sounds like you feel like this is the 101 for people too. I do. I think it's absolutely foundational to human existence.

For example, I'm an osteopath, so I believe in the reciprocity between form and function. We recommend our treatments and supplements and this and that, but if the container It's not whole.

The container is broken. What are you putting into the body? Even if it's food, it is medicine. So you're bringing this information into your body through food.

But if the container, the structure of the containers like putting something in a leaky bucket. Yeah. So I think that movement is that other piece. We gotta fix the leaky buckets.

And then as you, anything that you bring in, the food that bring you in the information that your bringing in through the foods, it's not gonna go out of the holes in a leakey bucket.

sit in here and do what it needs to do energetically to help enhance, complete the process. So I think, again, it's foundational. It's sort of like, well, you know, what are the nutrients that you want to bring in the body?

And I say the first nutrient is the breath. and the breath also with the breathe comes movement. So that awareness, you know, the excursion of the rib cage and these bucket handle ribs, excersion the diaphragm, these are all fundamental life enhancing movements that occur.

in this human body, in these humans. So tapping into that with intention and awareness so that we really optimize everything else that were trying to do and what we're calling now the modifiable risk factors.

Have you ever come across Eurythmy? Do you know what that is? So yeah, I've got introduced to that for the last few years.

Movement, Breath, and the Social Fabric

And so it's interesting that different places in the world come to the same conclusion about the type of thing from different place. You know that that's a universal truth, right?

Yes, absolutely. Exactly. And that's these ancient wisdom traditions where we're talking about Qigong, Tai Chi, the martial arts, breath of work. These things have been around for tens of thousands of years.

So they knew something. Yeah. and these universal truths keep showing up and we give them different names, you know, different name for the vibration of different audiences.

But they're Eternal, right? They keep showing up for every generation. Amazing. So the purpose of this show started at the beginning because I would come to these conferences and I'd sit down and be like, everyone needs to see this, every physician needs it, and so few people were actually there and they weren't always videoing it.

Can you give us just a little taste of how Qigong maps onto the Matrix? Oh, absolutely. So, the first one, and I'm going to talk about today, you know, go through all seven nodes, but one of the ones is structure.

That's a node. What about our structural integrity? And so, again, there's the form and function and Qigong is an embodied movement practice. So there's the structure, there it's going through muscle and fascia and bone.

And this one also has one of the stronger evidence base, because, you know, that's a part of Western world and Western culture, right? You know we always want to know what's, the randomized control trial, what is the evidence based?

So I'm going to kind of start at the top and then go through all seven nodes. The top being where is this strongest? evidence base. And then where is it more supportive?

Just to give people that framework and then encourage the research. Let's keep growing this out. You know, Qigong is going to have the strongest evidence throughout all seven of the nodes, but maybe it is gonna be found that it's a vital sign, and it it structurally fundamental that supports all these seven nodes.

So that's what we'll be talking about today. Well, and also look, these are all interconnected networks, right? So it doesn't really matter about the evidence base for one.

If the one's driving all the rest, then who cares? Exactly. Who cares. Exactly, exactly. I'd love to get your thoughts on you. Have been really sort of more passionately involved for the last couple of years on the topic of dementia and Alzheimer's.

And I just, I feel like, uh, The fact that this is typically done in groups, right, that there's a connection, you talked about the social fabric, the fact we're bringing in movement, strength, even building muscle, which seems to be a critical risk factor, this could be part of a cultural transformation.

part of which is through functional medicine, because it's the only thing that seems to have ever worked for reversing it, but that if you could add this into it you start to get, you know, a lot more, so I just want to take a minute to talk about the incredible mission partners that we have here at the Evolution of Medicine that have made this possible.

So first and foremost I want So Fullscript has been an amazing partner for 10 years. We only pick partners that can help us achieve our vision and help you achieve your practice vision.

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And so many of the issues that practitioners face in building a successful practice, scaling a success practice come down to having the right support with people who have being there and done that.

Go to goevomed.com slash FPC. Big boost marketing, Uli and his team are the best in the business when it comes to really understanding how to market your functional medicine practice.

Go to goevomed.com slash big boost and see how they can help you. And then what you're going to be hearing a lot about is the formation of clinical networks.

Dementia, Research, and Community Practice

And ultimately, True Neura is our first effort at that, which is to build an integrated clinical network combining independent practices from across the country into a network that can reverse cognitive decline.

And if you go to goevomed.com slash TrueNeura, you can get a demo. You can see what it means to be part of an Integrated Clinical Network. That's mentorship, that's software, and that is making it easier for you to get incredible outcomes in a disease state where there are no other options.

So thanks to our mission partners. Let's get back to the content. Absolutely. When we talk about that social connection, so we're talking about the interconnected web of all humanity.

And again, this is something coming down through ancient wisdom traditions. Look at all the practices, all of the movement practices across the globe, many, African cultures, European cultures.

that where movement is fundamental and people don't do it by themselves, although getting in the room and dancing like nobody's watching is a fabulous thing, but it's done in group.

I can't help but be connected to you. If I'm feeling your energy, I am feeling you're joy, and feeling love and that's being transmuted to me, it is going to be hard for me not to feel better.

It's going to be hard for me to feel like I have no relationship to you if I'm moving with you, if i'm hearing your breath, I am feeling the energy coming off of your body and it's that part and again this is fundamental to the definition of practicing Qigong, it was practice in group, not in isolation.

And it is wonderful to go to China, and four o'clock in the morning, the hour of meditation, you go in parks and people are just moving pre-sunrise. thousands of people in the parks.

It is something to witness and experience. And yeah, it'd be fabulous to bring that here so people really understand this interconnection of humanity.

This is how we heal. We heal in group. I get better because you get. Better this is also how our mind and our mirror neurons work and connect together.

We don't know all the mechanisms. We do know, though, that studies are showing, early studies, are that there is, if not a reversal, either a slowing down of the onset of dementia, we're seeing that, and it may yet prove to be preventive.

Yeah, that's amazing. Well, I would say, so I'm deep in it now and there's a study that is about to be published that shows 92% of people improve their cognition with functional medicine because the operating system is network insufficiency, understanding the insufficiency of the networks and working accordingly.

And there is some part of Qigong that building network sufficiency, building that work coherence across all the networks simultaneously. And ultimately, like if we get our mind into the fact that the paradigm is network and suficiency, and the Paradigm is building Network coherences, this seems like a tool that can really get us there.

Yeah, I'm so excited that I was granted some small amount of funding, a research study that I'm doing through Montana College of Osteopathic Medicine at an adult living community.

And so I've trained medical students in a particular form of Qigong, and we're working out in the community, our grants called the Compassionate Community Grant.

Again, to see some of the people that are coming, they're all between like 75 and 97, actually, the age range. And they love the social aspect. They show up there, they sit in circle, and they move together.

And there's this incredible deepening of the bond, the human heart, that they look forward to this. For not just the movement, because they love the movements, but they also look for how it makes them feel.

It's wonderful to see how they connect with the students, so you have this intergenerational connectivity that's also happening, which is another part of this group work, right?

That it goes through generations. That's really powerful. It's got my mind thinking about all the different ways that this could be used and harnessed.

I'd love to find out more about Montana. You were chosen to come and move from New Jersey to go to Montana, how have these ideas permeated into the Montana culture?

Montana, Teaching, and Clinical Integration

Well, it's interesting. One of the things that I noticed about the Montana culture, there are people who love the land. And that's kind of like they, first of all, they want to know, how do you do?

And then they shake your hand and they're like, well, can you rope a calf? Can you mend a fence? Can you shoot

a gun? Because it's sort of like, oh, you just work with your head.

You don't work your hands, your body. So there's a tremendous amount of respect for… being able to work the land. So that's part of the culture. The other thing is they do love to relax in group.

We have a wonderful regional theater there, and they will show up for a country western concert. They'll show for jazz concert, they'll showed recently we had an incredible tango dance concert they show off for that.

There'll be in their cowboy hats and their boots, but they're curious. value in that culture is driven by curiosity and driven my connection. This is how they relax together.

They find ways and they do like, you know, not the violin, but the fiddle and line dancing. So there is a thread in the culture that says that we move together, we listen to music together and you see it growing in popularity, particularly in this city of Billings, which is the largest city.

The rest of the state is very, very rural, so people can be very scattered apart, but they really do cherish coming together. And that was a delightful surprise for me.

That's amazing. What are you taking away so far from this conference and how it feeds into your work? And what are some of things that you'll be taking back to Billings?

Well, one of the things I'm going to be taking back to Billings is really this whole concept of functional medicine. I really want to introduce it to my colleagues and work in partnership with the Institute to really expand this idea of integrative medicine and functional in the center of that and it just makes sense being osteopaths which you know this whole person care which is such a fundamental part of osteopathic medicine here in The United States and I'm also going to be we opened with dance the concert The whole concert, it was like a concert in that moment.

So the whole conference opened with dance. This morning we had a beautiful Tai Chi session led by a doctor who practiced it at the Scripps Institute. There has been a fundamental thread of the importance of movement, the important of connection, and the import of community tapping in through this energetic interconnected web of humanity.

And it's that idea that I'm going to be expounding upon and talking about more and more. I do have several courses where one of my courses is Qigong in the osteopathic medicine and manipulative practices.

And I'm also teaching a course that I designed on integrative medicine. So really expanding those courses and bringing more opportunities so that young doctors to be, you don't just tell a person to move more.

You've got some tools in your toolkit and you've some foundation about breath work. Your developing a practice. I am encouraging all my faculty, staff and the students, You need a personal practice, not just to tell somebody to go, what are you doing?

What are you doing to impact the field yourself? And that starts with your own healing. I'm just imagining right now a doctor and practitioner who is practicing functional medicine where they have sort of a language, a common language to build teams and work with these kinds of practitioners.

Where they are looking to get out further into the community and where they could go out and actually do things like doing Qiyong in the park where people will see it and be like, what is this?

I want it because there is, I think there was a moment where People are starting to be attracted to something that they know that They want, but they just don't know how to Get it I created a couple years a thing called Vegas Fest and the goal was to try and get people doing Vegas nerve healing essentially in parks and in groups.

So as a way to kind of put that at the beginning of healing rather than doing all the functional medicine stuff and then being like, oh, hang on, the nervous system needs help, like start there because that's the communication

pathway of everything.

I feel like this is just that essentially because Qigong is that. It is, it's the communication node, right?

Closing Reflections on Accessible Healing

And I love that, because you know, vagus nerve, that's just so fascinating. And that is that autonomic nervous system that we are impacting and healing when we do this kind of contemplative movement.

So I love that idea. And that's the wonderful, let's just start doing little flash mobs of vagus nerve healing and Qigong and breath work outdoors where the community can see it.

It's a remarkable experience to see. You would see and you would remark on it to someone else. Do you see what was happening in the park that day? Oh, I saw it, it kind of looks cool.

Maybe I want to be in there. I love that. Maybe that's what I'll do this summer. A little flash mob. Yeah, a little Qigong flashmob in Billings, Montana.

Well, if you do that, capture it on video because I'd love to see it and I would love see how it works. Look, I want to share a bit about Gabe and the vision that he had before he passed and it was really that You know, we built the functional forum around the idea early on when there was very little.

There was much less functional medicine talent than there is today, right? There were a lot fewer practitioners who really had built an expertise. And so the show that we started in 2014, We had a show and we live streamed it.

So that, you know, if you were in Billings, Montana back then and there wasn't a lot of functional medicine talent, You could at least watch it on the TV and then you could be in a group of people that were into it and you Could, build confidence from speaking to people locally, but also seeing it On the tv and, one of the things that that Gabe saw was that he could imagine something similar happening there where, the person that He followed he found on YouTube And for the years before he built a local little group of people that did it together, he just had that kind of relationship.

But then over time, there's enough people locally where you can actually have that much richer community experience with them. And when I saw what you were speaking about, it made me want to share that because I don't think I really shared it much at that point.

We did do a webinar about six months before we passed with uh talking about qigong um but i think you have you, have a sort of uh the presence from the dancing plus the do credibility that i hope can maybe move the needle and moving this forward and it would be a big uh i want to help however i can to get this moving because I think you're an incredible spokesperson for it.

And I actually think this could be the mending of the social fabric that we so desperately need and is necessary to not only fix health care, but also the partner with you on that.

That would be awesome. Well, watch this space because we'll find out a way to do that and thank you so much for your pioneering work. Thank you for bringing this topic.

I've been blown away, been recording these podcasts about just how much of cultural wisdom when it comes to functional medicine can understand where function is lost.

and build back function in new and interesting ways that cost less and are more valuable and more cohesive. And I think that if we really want to take the widespread adoption of functional medicine, there are going to have to be ways we measure function and improve function that don't look like the ways they've been in V1.

That is the evolution of medicine. Absolutely. And thank you for the work that you're doing. So I've been a fan and I

just, you know, I love your books and resonate.

But seriously, and I do think that we can do things in functional medicine that are accessible, because that's been part of the problem, right? Not accessible.

Very, very heady. And what's more fundamental than inviting people to tap into what is already there? Your breath. simple movement, easy movement. And again, the profound beauty and tenderness of experiencing your own humanity.

Really knowing, really knowing that it's here. Love that. All right. Well, this has been a wonderful episode. Thank you, Doctor. thank you for being here.

This has being another episode of the Evolution of Medicine podcast. If this inspired you please share it with physicians, friends, anyone that you think needs to hear this message.

I think this is incredibly powerful and it takes me back to the legacy of The Evolution in Medicine and what we would love to achieve. And I hope that this was inspiring to all of you.

Um, we will have another episode next week. Thanks so much for tuning in. We'll see you next time. So I just want to take a minute to talk about the incredible mission partners that we have here at the Evolution of Medicine that have made this possible.

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So thanks to our mission partners. Let's get back to the content.