My Journey to Functional Medicine - Finding Hope Beyond Conventional Treatment Transcript

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Opening and autoimmune root-cause frustration

We addressed those triggers instead of just suppressing my symptoms. Is it only change related? I remember sitting in that office, a doctor myself, yet feeling utterly helpless.

The approach was to treat the disease, not the person. There was no discussion about potential causes. My gato. Environmental triggers. Nutritional deficiencies. Stress levels.

All factors that we now know can profoundly impact autoimmune conditions. It wasn't my doctor's fault. This is how we are trained in medical school. We are taught to identify the disease.

Welcome to Doctor Talks, the podcast where every episode leads to a healthier you. Join us as we navigate the world of optimal health, uncovering groundbreaking strategies to conquer chronic disease.

In each episode, we'll bring you the latest insights from leading health experts, medical innovators, and wellness warriors. If you are seeking to transform your health journey, or if you're looking for answers to burning questions, you've come to the right place.

Get ready to unlock the secrets of lifelong health and vitality. This is Doctor Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.

Today's episode is a bit different because I wanted to share my personal journey with you. Why?

Podcast intro and host background

I started this podcast, how I found functional medicine and what drives my passion for helping people with kidney disease and other chronic health conditions find real healing.

So I completed my medical training at some of the most prestigious institutions, including Cleveland Clinic. I specialized in nephrology, which is kidney medicine, and became double board certified in internal medicine and kidney medicine.

I was practicing exactly as I had been trained, diagnosing conditions, prescribing medications, managing symptoms. I believed in the system. I believed I was helping people.

And in many ways, I was. But something happened that would completely transform my understanding of health and healing. I became a patient. I remember that night vividly.

My husband was on call and I was home alone with my young daughter. She woke up crying in the middle of the night, and when my feet touch the floor, I felt shooting pains throughout my body.

I knew immediately something was wrong. I tried to walk to her room, but I could barely move. Holding on to the walls for support. When I finally made it to her door, I couldn't even turn the doorknob because of the piercing pain I had in my wrist.

I struggled to just pick up my sweet baby girl. Over the next few weeks, the joint pain got increasingly intense and more frequent. I was overwhelmed, deeply fatigued, and tapping into what little energy I had left.

As a doctor, I knew something wasn't right. So I got lab work done. The results came back. Rheumatoid arthritis, an

autoimmune condition where the body's own cells starts destroying the joints.

Rheumatoid arthritis diagnosis and conventional treatment

After meeting with the rheumatologist, I had some answers, like many new questions. As a physician myself, I knew all too well the effects of advanced rheumatoid arthritis and the side effects of the powerful medications that were offered to me, which were the immunosuppressive.

The standard approach was clear. Suppress the immune system. Manage the symptoms. Prepare for a lifetime of medications with potential serious side effects.

No one was asking why or why was my immune system attacking my own tissues? What triggered this response? Could we address those triggers instead of just suppressing my symptoms?

Is it only change related? I remember sitting in that office, a doctor myself, yet feeling utterly helpless. The approach was to treat the disease, not the person.

There was no discussion about potential causes. My gato. Environmental triggers, nutritional deficiencies, stress levels, all factors that we now know can profoundly impact autoimmune conditions.

It wasn't my doctor's fault. This is how we are trained in medical school. We are taught to identify the disease and match it with the appropriate medication or procedure.

It's a system designed for acute care for treating infections, injuries, and emergencies. And it's excellent at that. But for chronic conditions for the epidemics of autoimmune disease, diabetes, heart disease and yes, get disease that we are seeing today.

This approach falls short. I knew there had to be another way, a different solution, a more natural, holistic approach. So I did what many of you have probably gone or done.

I consulted Doctor Google. I began my own research, diving deep into the scientific literature.

Searching for root causes and nutrition

After a few weeks of searching, I stumbled upon nutrition websites and started reading about foods that can help from within that can help decrease inflammation and help regulate my immune system.

That's when I had my light bulb moment. I realized the answers to many of my burning questions were in nutrition. It might be hard to believe, but many medical students know very little about nutrition.

In fact, a 2010 survey revealed that only 25% of medical schools in US actually require their students to take a nutrition course as part of their medical curriculum, resulting in an average of fewer than 20 total hours of nutrition education, compared to more than 10,000 hours of medical and clinical education.

During this time, I discovered whole fields of medicine that weren't emphasized in my training. Functional medicine. Nutrition. Biochemistry. Environmental medicine.

Psycho neuro immunology. Discipline. STAT can look at the body as an interconnected system rather than as isolated compartments. I sought out additional training, became certified in functional medicine.

Lifestyle medicine Plant-Based nutrition, and even homeopathy. Each new perspective gave me tools I hadn't had before. Ways to address health at its fundamental levels and my own health began to transform by addressing the root causes of my condition healing my gut, removing inflammatory triggers from my diet, addressing nutrient deficiencies, managing stress.

I experienced improvements that I had been told weren't possible. I wasn't just managing my condition, I was actually healing it. This personal transformation ignited something in me.

My vision changed.

Functional medicine training and personal healing

What started as finding answers and options for myself turned into a passion to help my patients with kidney disease, high blood pressure, gut issues, autoimmune issues.

I began to see my kidney patients differently. I started to ask, what if we applied these same principles to kidney disease? What if instead of just managing declining kidney function, we address why the kidneys were failing in the first place?

I believe in viewing the person as a whole, rather than having a tunnel vision and focusing on just one organ, because I know I wasn't the only person struggling with these issues.

There is a severe lack of holistic approach for people suffering from kidney disease and other autoimmune disease. I started integrating these approaches with willing patients at my practice at Cleveland Clinic.

We didn't abandon conventional treatments. They remained valuable tools, but we added layers comprehensive nutrition assessment, gut health supplements, reducing detoxing, exposure, detoxification, stress management strategies.

I believe in optimizing health by addressing the root cause of the problem. Only you know the cause. You have the ability to obtain wellness and even prevent disease in the first place through making lifestyle changes.

Getting to the root cause of kidney disease or any other systemic disease, requires identifying systemic physiological imbalances and in-depth investigation of individuals, environment and lifestyle.

I lifestyle and environment, not our genes, have the largest impact on our development of our disease.

Applying root-cause care to kidney disease

And by doing this, these are transformational results that honestly surprised me. I recall a male patient. I think it was like around 60 years old who was told that he would be starting dialysis in a few months.

His kidney function was like 12%, and he was already experiencing symptoms of advanced kidney disease, which was fatigue, brain fog, swelling in the legs, poor appetite.

We did a deep dive into his case, discovered several major inflammatory triggers, including undiagnosed mold infection and significant gut imbalances.

And we created a personalized plan for him. Six months later, his kidney function improved to 34%, almost more than double, and most of his symptoms had resulted.

He still dialysis free after three years. Now, I want to be clear I'm not claiming miracles or giving you guarantees. Every person is different and has different root causes.

What works for one patient may not be the right treatment for another, which is why results vary. Some patients improve significantly, while others modestly.

This is personalized medicine, not a one size fits all approach. But these successes made me realize how many people aren't aware that these options exist.

How many patients are told there's nothing they can do except wait for dialysis? How many are suffering with symptoms that could be improved with a more comprehensive approach?

That's why I created this podcast. I wanted to share what I've learned both as a doctor and as a patient, to help you understand that there are options beyond symptom management, that the body has an incredible capacity to heal when given the right support, that you don't have to accept a declining health as inevitable.

I'm no longer just a doctor. I've been a patient myself, and that experience fundamentally changed how I practice medicine. I'm not a dictator of treatment.

Patient success story and personalized medicine

I see myself as a companion and guide on your health journey. When I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, what I wanted most was a doctor who would sit with me, talk about why it happened, and figure out how to get me out of it, not just apply a Band-Aid approach or suppress my immune system without addressing the root cause.

And that's the kind of doctor I strive to be for patients. Now, someone who listens, and one who investigates, who partners with you to find real solutions.

In the episodes to come, we will dive deep into the science of kidney health, chronic disease. We'll explore the gut kidney connection, the environmental toxins, the heavy metals, the impact of inflammation on the body, the role of nutrition, and so much more.

I'll share patient stories, practical protocols, and the latest research in a way that empowers you to take action. Because that's what this is all about empowerment.

Giving you the knowledge and tools to take control of your health journey. Now, I want you to be clear about something important. Even though I'm sharing this information, I'm not a doctor.

Why the podcast exists and closing message

I don't even know your specific situation or what's going on with your health. So please always consult with your doctor before making any significant changes to your treatment plan.

But I do hope that the information I share will help you ask better questions. Become a more informed patient, and perhaps open door to healing approaches you might not have considered before.

I believe we are at the beginning of a revolution in medicine, one that integrates the best of conventional care with deeper insights into how the body works as a whole system.

And I'm honored to be your guide through this new territory. That's my story, and that's why I'm here talking to you today. I hope that in sharing it, you'll feel less alone in your own health struggles and more hopeful about the possibilities ahead.

Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks. We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health. Each day is a new opportunity to make choices that empower your wellbeing.

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Real talks from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.