The 20-Year Warning: Detecting Alzheimer’s Before Symptoms Appear Transcript

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Introduction to the Reversing Alzheimer's Summit

Hello and welcome to the Reversing Alzheimer's Summit. I am super excited to have a special guest on here today. Doctor Tom O'Brien. If you have been in this world for the last 10 or 20 years, you know that doctor O'Brien has been leading the conversation on reversing autoimmune disease.

He's passionate about Alzheimer's. And what he's going to bring to you today is the critical information that you have to know if you care about someone with Alzheimer's.

If you feel that you're getting the first pangs of losing, some memory function or otherwise, and you're concerned about it for yourself or for others, this is going to be a great session.

And so much to share. So, Tom, thank you so much for for being part of this. And, I guess before we get into the, like, the nitty gritty of it, you know, I know that this, this topic is extremely meaningful for you and is so relevant to your sort of body of work.

It is. And thank you, James. It's a pleasure. Pleasure to be with you. Always is. We dance well together, so, yeah, it is, my my goal is making it easy for people to do the right thing.

But in order to do the right thing, you have to know what the right thing is. And it's not this one pill that some people are taking and some people get better, but others don't.

You know, it's not this diet. I mean, we keep chasing some symptomatic relief and we don't understand the big picture, the paradigm of why is this body, this and this brain now working the way it's supposed to, and when we can take a step back, you know, and just look with bigger eyes for a little bit, we said, oh, that makes sense.

And so that's what I want to do here, because I know you've got so many world class experts talking technical about Alzheimer's and and different protocols that work.

And I get it, I get it.

Inflammation as the Root of Chronic Disease

But I want to make it easy for people to not be, frozen with all of the great data that they're hearing, but rather, how does it relate to them and how can they move forward?

That's my goal here. Beautiful. While I appreciate that, it's a good addition to, to what we're doing here. And I guess I just want to say, like, you know, I think for the first time, we have on the horizon, you know, that the thing that we're hoping to do with this summit is one to just spread the word about the possibilities that exist.

The secondly, to actually, you know, alert practitioners to this, you know, budding network that is arriving in the world, right, where for the first time, there's the capacity of the practitioner network to reverse, these kind of conditions at scale, you know, and that's, that's where we're headed.

So, yeah, I think, let's, let's just jump into it. Great, great. So I prepared a few slides, to start us off. So if I can, share my screen. Let me, first get the, where is my screen?

Hang on a minute. Here and let's see where we're at here. Where is my screen? Sorry. This will take just a moment, so I we we're not. There we go. There we go.

Okay, now let's share screen. Let's get that up here. Zoom and share. Boom. Here we go. There we are. And I'd like to start with this because, you know, when I started my career, I listened to a couple of motivational speakers.

And one of the guys said something that always stuck with me, and that was if you review information within 24 hours and you review it again within 72 hours, it converts to long term memory much easier.

And so I went, you know, so many seminars I've gone to, I would try to review my notes and maybe the slides within the next day, and then within 2 or 3 days again.

And what happens then driving down the road and all of a sudden I'm thinking about that subject, you know, oh, what does that mean? You know. And so for all of us here, it's the same concept that I want to give you permission to think outside the box, you know, to think about this.

So if you review James's Alzheimer's summit, some of the information you hear within a day to two days and then again a couple days after that, it converts to long term memory and you're driving down on, oh, I remember that guy was talking about this particular protocol.

And that seems to make sense for me. But you have to give yourself permission and set yourself up for that. And then when you do, the goal is you dive in, you just dive in, you know, and you find what works for you, what seems like it will work for you.

You give it a shot. So there's a couple of basic concepts I want to give you that will help you tremendously with all of the great information you'll hear on this summit.

The first one is that we know now that the center for Disease Control has told us it's chronic inflammatory diseases. It's always inflammation that fuels the fire of the disease that you develop.

Now, the disease you develop is determined by two things by your genetics, the deck of cards that you've been dealt. And this is a term antecedents, which means how you live your life.

You eat tuna fish 2 or 3 times a week. You likely have mercury toxicity in your brain because most of the tuna has mercury. So that's an antecedent I yeah, you two.

And every once in a while, well, let's just check you for Mercury. That's an antecedent. So it's your genetics and antecedents that determine where you develop the problem.

But it's always inflammation. And here's the CDC. And they told us that 14 of the 15 top causes of death are chronic inflammatory diseases. It's always inflammation now.

So the question is why is my immune system activated. Trying to protect me? Why is it doing this? And when you learn that your immune system is always going to try to protect you, it's just the armed forces in your body.

It's the army, the navy, the air force, the Marines, the Coast Guard. We call them IGA, AGM cytokines, but they're just branches of the armed forces trying to protect you.

So the million dollar question is, what are they trying to protect you from? Why is that inflammation there that's affecting my brain function or affecting my joints or affecting my skin?

It doesn't matter what the symptoms are.

Autoimmunity and the Prodromal Phase

Of course it matters on how we feel. But the mechanism, the mechanism is the same. And we know if the cause of the inflammation persists, the inflammation will persist.

And it's called low grade chronic inflammation. And people don't know that they're sensitive to a particular food because they feel fine when they eat it.

And then every time they eat it, though, they get more inflammation. They just don't know if it doesn't make them sick when they eat it. That's an example of the kind of triggers of inflammation that can continue.

Now I have my patients all print this one out and put it on their refrigerator. Because when you understand this, you understand why there's so many different little pieces of the puzzle that you have to look at.

And this is from David Furman at the Book Institute on Aging. And what they show us is the wheel on the left, which means chronic infections or not exercising very much or carrying too much weight or too many bad guys in the gut.

We call it dysbiosis or eating the wrong foods or too much stress hormones or not enough sleep, or too many chemicals accumulating in your body. All those wheel, all those threads on the wheel when they get too high, they turn the wheel and the and the wheel in the center.

The gear in the center turns, activating your immune system to protect you from what it considers a threat. And when that wheel turns, it turns the wheel on the right side.

And now, depending on your genetic vulnerability, you get diabetes, type two diabetes or cardiovascular disease or cancer or depression or autoimmune diseases or the neurodegenerative diseases that we're talking about today, or osteoporosis or immuno senescence.

You're losing your brain function. It doesn't matter what the symptoms are. It does and how we feel. And I'm not minimizing that. But you have to understand the mechanism is that there's been this inflammation going on for a long time killing off brain cells, killing off brain cells, killing off brain cells.

That is a critical component because when you can embrace that concept, you then start thinking, where is my inflammation coming from? And then you start asking the question, well, this food that I want to eat, do I think that's going to cause more inflammation or less inflammation?

You know, you you now have a new paradigm that you're thinking with that. And we know with neurodegenerative diseases the inflammation is usually not coming from the brain.

It it gets activated in the brain. But that's not where it came from. It comes from the periphery. It comes from what we eat, what we breathe, the stress hormones we're producing.

It all comes from there. Now, this is one study I want to tell you about because it's got everything to do. And you. So this is my son who came in to say hello.

That's my friend James. Hey. You know, so I just want to share to let me know that, like, we met right before I had my first daughter, and now, like, now that I have, 11 years old and I spend a lot of time with parents who deal with chronic illness, one of the greatest gifts of being part of this community for 20 years is just seeing my kids thrive and being healthy, and it's such a such a big deal.

So I, you know, I spend a lot of time with parents who have unhealthy kids, and that has been like a a moment of transition for them. And I'm able to, you know, to have had this community and this education, you know, early on.

And I guess just before we get into this, I was just reflecting, you know, last year I went to the Integrative Medicine for Mental Health conference. And, you know, I'm sitting there and like, you know, we've been in this journey to build this software to help doctors make it easier to reverse Alzheimer's with true Neera and, and I know now because it's been bashed into me what these drivers of of of of reverse cognitive decline are and I'm sitting there listening to some of the top doctors in, in mental health and just realizing, well, it's the same things here.

And, you know, that that graphic that you just showed a minute ago is so powerful because it's like you don't

actually know what it's going to turn into, but you have and control.

You know, you can't control one of the cogs. That's right. It's, you know, whether it's lupus or whether it's Alzheimer's or otherwise, it's the same effort that's required.

And I just want to, like, appreciate you for for sharing that because that's really what we're trying to get across. Yes, it's a reversing Alzheimer's summit.

But if you keep these things under control, you're also going to limit your chances of getting all these other illnesses over a lifetime. Exactly, exactly.

Right now, this article by Melissa Book is so critically important for doctors to understand and for the general public to have kind of a big picture view.

She went to, the VA hospital and look for people with lupus. And in this one center, she found 132 people with lupus. Now, if they're in a VA hospital, they're veterans.

And if they're veterans, they were in the armed forces. And if they were in the armed forces, they had their blood drawn many times over the years while they were healthy in the Navy or the Marines or the Coast Guard.

And what most people don't know is the government's been saving and freezing almost all of that blood since 1978. They've got tens of millions of, frozen blood samples of our servicemen.

Alzheimer's Progression and Early Warning Signs

Well, our Buerkle knew this, so she went to the VA, and she asked for permission to look at the frozen blood of the currently diagnosed lupus patients when they were healthy in the Army or the Navy or the Air Force.

And what did she find? She found that antibodies are present years before there's ever a symptom. And they increase in a predictable way every single year.

And then eventually you get symptoms because the antibodies, when they're elevated, they're killing off tissue, killing off tissue, killing off tissue.

And you feel fine, you're in the Army or you're special forces. You know, you feel fine. It's not for ten years or 15 years later. Now you've got a problem and you've been diagnosed with the disease.

And she put this drawing in here. There are seven different antibodies to lupus. And I'm a little geeky. I'm sorry, but all you all you need to see is at each of the lines.

They keep going up higher and higher and higher and higher. And then they get a diagnosis or then they get symptoms, the first manifestation. But the antibody above the zero line is elevation of antibodies.

The zero line is normal. And so all of these people currently diagnosed with the auto immune disease lupus had the antibodies elevated at least five years beforehand.

Some of the antibodies 11 years, 12 years beforehand, killing off tissue, killing off tissue, killing off tissue while you feel fine. And she did this drawing.

She made this up. She said, first you have a normal level of antibodies. That's good. That's how it's supposed to be. Then you have an elevated level.

And she called it benign, because there's no symptoms. Then you get symptoms. She called it pathogenic, and then you get diagnosed with an illness. And but this is going on for years.

And this is what's happening in Alzheimer's. It's going on for years. And the prodromal period is when it's easiest to stop this in its tracks and turn it around.

It's much easier if you can identify, hey, look at this mechanism going on. Well, I feel fine. I don't have any problem with my memory. Okay. But look at this mechanism and this mechanism is going on.

Killing off tissue, killing off tissue, killing off tissue, which gives you the opportunity to address it. Now. Yeah, we see all that. This is the I feel fine syndrome when the antibodies are elevating.

But in reality it's the prodromal period. One more concept to give you. And then I'm done with the slides. Most of us remember back in 2017, front page in most newspapers in the country, Alzheimer's is going to bankrupt Medicare.

And within 25 years. So the government put together a commission of world class scientists to figure out what are we going to do about this? And they worked really hard at this, but it took them two years to come out with the report.

And this is the report they came out with. Not the two years later after they began. And there's a drawing in here that is going to make so much sense to you.

Now, this is the drawing. Now, first, you have a normal amount of immune function in the brain, but then you have this period here. Do you remember the word prodromal.

And this is going on for over 20 years with no symptoms whatsoever. No symptoms. You feel fine. That's the I feel fine syndrome. But because people don't check, they don't test to see if there is any inflammation in their brain.

They don't know what's going on. But it's killing off tissue, killing off tissue. And then it progresses to mild cognitive impairment. Now you're walking into the parking lot.

Where did I parked my car? Where are my keys? You know, these silly little things? I'm getting old. I'm not remembering the way I used to. Well, how old are you?

Well, I'm 38. Well, that's not supposed to happen, right? That's just not supposed to happen. And this is the last piece of information to give you to wake people up.

Blue Cross Blue Shield came out with this report in February of 2020. No one paid attention to it. Absolutely no one. Why? Because that's when the virus came out and we were all scared about the virus, and it was in the news all the time.

But they showed that in the four year period the previous four year period, Alzheimer's had gone through like this in four years. And this is the one that really shocked me.

Gut-Brain Connection and Reducing Brain Inflammation

407% increase in 30 to 44 year olds of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's. It's happening earlier and earlier and earlier, and that's all that I wanted to share.

James and slides and now we can talk. But this is like a wake up wave. Okay, wait a minute. What did he say okay. Inflammation okay. It's always inflammation okay.

And the inflammation is going on causing tissue damage when I feel fine. But my exams from my doctors don't look for this kind of stuff, so they never identify it until I've got symptoms.

And that may be years of killing off tissue before I get symptoms. Okay, okay, I understand that. Okay. That's the message that I want to give here today.

And now have some discussion with you about this and what what can we do about this? Of course. But it's critically important that people don't wait until they are noticing substantial symptoms, that if there a family history of cognitive decline or if you're in the early stages, you get this check.

You look for the markers of inflammation. Now and you find out, well, there's a couple things I want to just feedback. And I think first of all, it's a really powerful message.

And I'm glad you're keeping track of all that. I want to talk a little bit later about, you know what? What's happened in the four years since then? Because I think that's very interesting as well.

But, yeah, I mean, you know, so when we look out at, like the, the sort of allopathic world and the world for Alzheimer's, like the last 20 years has been a bit of a mess with Alzheimer's.

Research because they weren't studying the right endpoints. But on this summit, we're going to actually have a lecture with up to, Rick, Galbraith about a promising new drug, that is coming along.

But the interesting thing about that drug, the thing that it does is reduce brain inflammation, right? That's the that's how it works. So it's like, yeah, but I'm not.

You wait for this magical drug to come on or whether or not you get active. Now ultimately, do you want to be taking the drug forever or do you want to, like, live in an anti-inflammatory state?

So what would you say the sort of when it comes to brain inflammation, what are the sort of like biggest levers that you've seen to make sure that you minimize brain inflammation for people who are in the early stages or having maybe early symptoms?

It was Professor Michael Gershon, and I think he was at Princeton, I'm not sure. Back in 1999, published the book The Second Brain. And in that book. So we've known this for over 20 years now.

He showed us that for every one message from the brain going down, telling the gut what to do, there are nine messages from the gut going up, telling the brain what to do.

The ratio is 9 to 1. And so oh wait, what? What? And the medical term is modulates. And all that means is that it's the gut that has its hands on the steering wheel of the direction your brain is going.

And you turn your steering wheel five degrees to the right, 50 yards down the road, you're off the road, you're off the road. So when your guts out of balance, the messages going up to your brain, our brains of inflammation, they trigger more and more inflammation.

So one of the basic things for people to understand is that a component not to sure cure fix of everything, but the a component of addressing this topic is to build a healthy, diverse microbiome of all the good guys in your gut and not so many bad guys so that the messages coming from the gut bacteria, you know, if I exercise too hard, James.

And the next day my biceps are sore. We all know that's lactic acid. You know, that's just, you know, the exhaust of the muscle cells from working too hard.

Drink some water, wait a day and you'll be fine. Right? Just flush it out. Well, the bacteria in your gut have exhaust. They're producing exhaust all the time.

We call them short chain fatty acids. Nucleic acids, DNA. But it's just exhaust. They're messages coming from the bacteria in your gut that go up to the brain.

And they've got their hands on the steering wheel. So one of the things that you have to learn first, you have to test your gut to see what shape it's in.

While my gut is fine, I don't have any problems. That's the I feel fine syndrome. You have to check and see how balanced or imbalanced is my gut right now, and then begin learning the lifestyle habits that help to balance that environment so that the messages look, we've known since 1990, for I think it was one cup of blueberries a day every day.

And in 13 years, your brain, in three years, your brain is thinking as well as it was 13 years earlier, they published that back in the early 90s, a cup of blueberries a day. Why?

Because they activate the genes of anti inflammation in your brain. They're the fire extinguishers to put the fire out. So you want to you want to throw less gasoline on the fire.

You have to find out what's triggering all this. And you want to turn on the fire extinguishers to put the fire out. Beautiful. Yeah, that makes so much sense.

And the gut brain connection, you know, so, so, important and powerful. You know, as we start to, you know, as people start to activate into this, you know, I know that you've been, you know, being a, like you just mentioned a minute ago, like, testing and not guessing.

You know, I guess I just would, like, get your thoughts as to if you're someone who is worried about this, what would be some of the key tests that you would recommend to someone to, to take to sort of get an idea of where they are on their, prodromal journey?

Testing for Brain Inflammation

Really good question. And if it's okay, I'm going to share my screen again for sure, because the next slide, the very next slide, when I turned it off, is the one that we want here that this is.

Let me get on full screen. Oh what did I do there? Come back, come back. Where are you? Where did you go? There you are. Okay. Let's brain. You know I'm supposed to be better at this, but I'm not.

Let me. Oh, I see what I get up here like that. There we go. Okay, so we know that. And we went there and there's that prodromal period of Alzheimer's.

So it's 25 to 30 years before you get a diagnosis. All of this is going on. So what do you do about this? What do I do. Well there is a test that came out a few years ago that is a game changer.

It's called the Neural Zoomer. Plus this test looks at 53. This is one of my patients. This is test looks at 53 markers of inflammation in the brain 53.

And so and with a high degree of accuracy. So when you do a test like this you find out is my brain on fire. Now. So it's great to look at some of the general markers of inflammation in the body like C-reactive protein.

You know, that's that's great. But that's a general for the whole body. This is specific for the brain. And when you do a test like this and it's so simple, it's a finger prick.

That's all you have to do. You don't even need to have a blood draw. It's a finger prick. And it is so accurate and jaw dropping that from that test you now have, startled.

Most people are quite startled to see how many areas are inflamed to begin with, but then now they have an understanding of what they have to focus on.

You see, we started off and I said, my goal is to make it easy to do the right thing. But if you don't know what you're doing, you're shotgunning and hoping something's going to work.

And so you have to find out. And you're absolutely right. The rule is here for us. It's in God. We trust all other

require all others require data test.

Don't guess. Yeah. Find out with the right tests what's my current status. And then you focus your attention. Learning. What do I do to address the problems?

Obviously there has to be problems. You know, if you're concerned about it, you check it out. And yeah, you're going to find the problems. Okay. What do I do about that. Yeah.

Well I just I guess I want to just finish off by talking about the state of the world, because you showed there that was like a moment in 2020 where it became clear, you know, what was happening with Alzheimer's and what the journey was with that report.

But, you know, if you look now, in the last four years, you know, as you start to look at the science, you start to see all the things that we've had a lot of in the last four years.

So fear isolation. Yeah. You know, Covid vaccines, as I look at all of these things now, the research starts coming out to say all of these things can actually really negatively affect the brain.

And it's it's interesting, you know, now for myself, being in this position where we're trying to like build an army of practice is to reverse brain diseases that, like all of the things that are being thrown at us as a population, all end up in the brain.

Recent Stressors and Protecting Brain Health

Yeah. I just love for you to comment on that, because I know you're passionate about it, and I know you want to see the kind of change in the world. And ultimately, like, we have to work harder than ever before to keep the poison at bay.

Whether that be social poison, chemical poison, whatever. And to keep keep our minds, straight and our brain healthy. James, you're absolutely right. You're right on the money.

And remember, it's always inflammation. Emotional stress creates inflammation. Toxic air creates and mold in your house creates inflammation. Gluten creates inflammation.

Any food you're sensitive to will create inflammation. And it's inflammation that's in your bloodstream. Right. And your brain is about 2% of your body weight, but it has just over 20% of your blood at any one time.

So if the blood's full, full of all these inflammatory molecules, it's going to tear up the lining of your brain. You know, here comes the leaky brain, the blood brain barrier.

And then here comes all of the inflammation in the brain. While you feel fine, you're still feeling fine. This is going on for 20 some years, and this last 4 or 5 year period has been extremely stressful for all of us.

Fueling more gasoline on the fire, more petrol on fire. The analogy I give, and I think this would really fit with your summary of the last four years.

Many of us have had the experience of starting a charcoal fire, you know, for a barbecue and you squirt some charcoal lighter fluid on there and you throw a match on it and it doesn't catch right.

James, have you ever had that happen? You throw a match, it doesn't catch. I have no idea. In my South African heritage, you know, starting a fire is, is part of, being a man.

And, you know, we don't mess around with charcoal, but I understand, I understand, but, you know, in the US, there was, you know, there's lots of charcoal, lighter fluid going, but you throw a match and it doesn't light, you light another match and you lay it down on the coals and then at an angle so it doesn't go out.

But you can't squirt the charcoal lighter fluid on the, on the flame. It'll douse the flame. It goes out. You have to squirted on the charcoal next to it, and the splash catches to the flame, and then it'll catch right.

What would happen the last four years is an example of this. What would happen if you would pour gasoline on the charcoals and then threw a match on it?

The last four years have been gasoline on the charcoals. Yeah, this big explosion of inflammation for all of us, practically all of us. It's been tremendously accelerated for whatever your genetic vulnerability is for so many people, whether it's autoimmune diseases or cognitive decline.

So when you understand it's always inflammation, always. And then you start focusing on how do I reduce the triggers of inflammation in my body. So first you have to learn what are the triggers in your body compared to your spouse or your children.

Because we're all different, we have some common triggers, but we all are unique. Is it stress hormones? Is it a toxic relationship? Where is it coming from?

So once you learn that now, it's easy to do the right thing because now you understand what's going on in your body, and then you learn the tools at events like this with the many speakers and all have great things to talk about.

You learn the tools of how do I start to put the fire out? Beautiful. Well, well, that's what we're all about, all week here at this summit. And thank you so much for your incredible contribution, not just to this summit, but to, the field.

I know you're so passionate about so many of these topics, and, you know, I've inspired so many around the world. You know, your your desire, like, I think I don't know if anyone in our world who's done more international lecturing than you because of your, like, international style.

So I know you, you've lived in Costa Rica. You've lived in Italy, you've lived in Ireland, you've lectured all over Europe and, you know, just, you know, how much, how much, of your own dowsing that you're doing, you know, for the movement, by by going out and getting people fired up about this conversation.

So thank you for that leadership. Thank you for sharing so generously with our community here today. And I hope that you've inspired people who are watching to, take action either for themselves or family members or ideally, getting a little group together to implement these ideas so that you can hold each other accountable to support each other.

And, thank you so much for, for for all of that. Well, thank you, James, and for hosting this event, coordinating it. You've been, as you know, as long as I've been doing this, you've been here, you know, as you said last ten, 12 years, we're side by side with our skills.

And in, carrying the message out as best we can. Thank you so much. All right. This is being the Reversing Alzheimer's summit. Be here with doctor Tom O'Brien.

We'll have all the details, in the notes for what he shared. And, hope you can check out some of the other sessions that we have coming up. We got some great stuff coming up in the next couple of days, so make sure to check it out.

Thanks so much for tuning in, and we'll see you at the next event.