Introduction and Guest Background

Everybody. Great to be with you. I have my friend, Doctor Paul Anderson with us. I'd like to refer to him as the professor. Hope he doesn't mind that.

But May Z has been a professor, and I've known Paul for a long time. We actually were in school together. Boy, we're hitting Paul, I think written in like the 30 year mark now.

So it's been a little, little while. But we've stayed in touch and we've worked together in some projects, including a book called Outside the Box Cancer Therapies, and Paul's written other books.

And by the way, I recommend you go to his website. It's doctor A a like and Anderson doctor A now no w.com. And there you can get more information on integrative medicine, holistic treatments, all the good things.

That is up to as many, many podcasts and videos you can watch as well. So Doctor Anderson, today is a very big topic because we're talking about gut health related to autoimmunity.

And you teach doctors about this subject. So for the layperson, Altair, can you maybe give us your thoughts on the intricacies of the digestive tract?

And then we'll get into how that connects to the immune system and whether the immune system is balanced or not. Sure. Well, thanks for having me on first.

And yes, we've been around a long time now. That's it's good we're still here. So, you know, I think that when it comes to the GI tract, unless you've maybe taken a course or physiology or something, it's easy to kind of underestimate how complicated our digestive system is.

How the Digestive Tract Works

It's really an amazing group of organs that all work together to make sure that we digest and absorb the nutrients from our food. And I always like to talk to patients about it's really a well-orchestrated system that has a lot of feedback.

So what we do when we chew or digest on the front end, and then when the stomach takes over and then the small intestine, etc., everybody's got a different job.

And one of the things that happens is either because of stressors or some diseases, or potentially just not even eating properly, we can confuse that orchestration in the digestive system.

And so you think, well, I, you know, I could put the same food in my mouth and it goes through the system. But if it's not, say, chewed properly or if the stomach's not doing its job properly or the beginning of the small intestine, the nutrients I get may be completely different downstream.

So I was like to start there with we, you know, we eat, of course, every day we think about eating, but we don't think about how, you know, amazingly well connected and orchestrated.

Just getting that food digested is okay. So that really and the reason I start there is by either by our own actions, maybe by eating things that we shouldn't, or eating too quickly, or not eating enough or eating too much.

We can throw the whole system off just to start with. But also there's certain disorders that will say slow down by the production of different things in different places.

We've got, you know, acid in our stomach and enzymes in the small intestine, etc. those can all be thrown off too. And I think thinking of that as a base is important.

And then we take the leap to immunity does people will say, well, I you know, I get it. Food we eat and we're trying to get nutrients out of the food to go in our blood and feed the cells.

That makes sense. Why? Why an immune connection with my digestive system? Well, if we think about all that orchestration of getting the food through and everything, the first part is just a real sort of simple, obvious part of immune function, which is really your digestive system is the place that interacts with the outside world the most outside of your skin.

And that means we take food from the outside world and we eat it. We put it inside of our body. So if we didn't have a digested immune system, we may actually have more inappropriate bacteria or parasites or other things that you know would probably not be compatible with life.

So thankfully, among all this orchestration we have of digestion, we also have different immune functions all along the way through all the way from the mouth, you know, through the colon.

So there's the obvious immune system, which is let's not let the food we eat, you know, become an infectious problem, let's say, or something like that.

So each little section has its own sort of anti-infective. For example, one of the things that the stomach does with the acid is actually antibacterial.

Now, not all bacteria die in acid, but many do. Some of the enzymatic activities antibacterial a lot of the mucous membrane activities very anti infected.

So then if you take well. So let's not let the food do us in. You know through an immune problem we must have a lot of immune cells, little you know pieces of the immune system that go through the whole digestive tract.

And indeed that's true. So one of the things that if we go to the next step and we agree it's orchestrated and it's got some immune function, and we also agree that either through disease or maybe just eating things we shouldn't, or eating too quickly, etc., we can throw all that off.

Well, that can throw the immune system off in the digestive system as well. And when I have patients, especially, you know, people with chronic digestive complaints or maybe an autoimmune digestive condition, etc., that we'll talk a lot about that and how we can undo the damage that has happened.

Gut Health and Immune Function

But sometimes it takes a little more effort to undo the damage because the immune system gets a little confused the longer it's not operating properly.

Right? And that can lead to, you know, a number of avenues where the immune system can become confused. One is the mucous membranes. They have a lot of immune proteins, immunoglobulins in them.

Those can get out of balance. We've all heard of the good bacteria or good flora. Well that's very to your diet okay. Your good flora and your diet are directly related not just in how the bacteria come in you, but they actually eat as well.

So good flora eat different things than what we might call bad flora. So the flora balance is huge. And then if we've been sick a long time, we can develop what we used to call resistance factors.

Nowadays, most people know them as biofilms, which are normal to all, you know, all life basically. But if you're sick, sort of like your good bacteria, bad bacteria go out of balance.

If you're sick a long time, your normal biofilm, you know, reservoir becomes pathological and it holds the wrong organisms together. So there's a lot of avenues through which the immune system can either be strengthened or weakened through our digestive system.

Absolutely. And we're going to talk more about that maybe for the viewers out there. Tell me a bit more about really what's going on with autoimmunity, just from a kind of basic overview, if you would.

Yeah, autoimmunity, which is, you know, I think you and I probably one of the more common reasons we see people with chronic digestive problems that are certainly not functional would be auto immune digestive conditions.

And it is self descriptive in that it's an immune reaction against you. So auto immune and people will say, well, that doesn't make any sense because our immune system is supposed to know who we are and who we who the bad guys are, which is true.

That can become a bit confused. So there's a number of ways that the confusion happens. But to keep it simple, if you have something that gets to your cells and let's say it's a cell in your colon, or maybe the connective tissue type cells that hold all of your digestive tract together, anything important.

And then that cell has something get to it that is not part of your original makeup, not original equipment for that self. The immune system often see that cell and go and say, well, there's something wrong with the cell.

So we're going to clean it up. We're going to take that cell away, which we do all the time. The problem that will happen is if it's something that actually gets inside the cell, the immune system might get confused.

And while it's making a memory against the bad guy, it makes a memory against a piece of your colon cell or a piece of your small intestine, cell or connective tissue.

And now you've got your immune system kind of attacking those cells constantly. The common things are. So you think, well, what would get inside of a cell?

Well, viruses get inside cells. All the toxins you can think of, whether they're chemical or metal or even, you know, mycotoxins or fungal toxins, etc.

all of those things go into the cell. So a lot of times we see these things at the very beginning of, you know, autoimmunity. And there's other reasons word as well.

But it's it's really a insidious process. Usually it doesn't, you know. Come on immediately. And in most cases, and I'm sure you've had this when you really take a long history on an autoimmune digestive patient, they'll often say, well, you know, my whole life I've had stomach problems.

What I'm quote, you know, I've had digestive issues, but they got better and then they got worse and all this. Well, usually what that means is, you know, maybe ten, 15 years before they were diagnosed with something like Crohn's or colitis or something, those diseases that are auto immune, their body was working up to it, probably through this mechanism of your body getting confused and attacking itself.

There's so many autoimmune diseases. You think of things like autoimmune thyroiditis, known as Hashimoto's thyroiditis from the system attacks the thyroid tissue.

The number one cause of low thyroid people in America and around the world. You have people familiar with rheumatoid arthritis, for example, children's syndrome, which can affect the your energy levels, your joints.

I mean list.

Autoimmunity and Leaky Gut

There's, you know, over hundreds of autoimmune diseases, of course, but from a holistic perspective, we always, at least in part, are addressing the digestive system.

Talk a bit more about that, perhaps with let's start with the connection with leaky gut syndrome, and then we'll get into the microbiome, if that's okay.

Sure. Yeah. You know, as you mentioned, there's many, many, many types of autoimmunity and most of them have some connection to the digestive tract, even if they're not considered a digestive auto immunity, because your immune system is everywhere and your digestive system has its own immune system that gets confused.

But when it comes to gut permeability. So the term, you know, to say or think of leaky gut, some people it sounds like, oh, that that doesn't sound good.

Well, it's it's really not good. And to other people say, well, there's no such thing as that. But if you look in the literature around digestive function but also pathology, they very much recognize GI permeability changes that come because of immune attack.

And so the term leaky gets more of a broad term to say something that is supposed to keep the cells together usually is attacking the parts that keep the cells together.

And I might now absorb things I never was intended to absorb. So let's say, for example, keep it as simple as possible in your small intestine where your proteins go.

So you eat some protein, your intestine and all the other apparatus, stomach, etc. break it down to amino acids and then the cells. Actually, if you get down to 2 or 3 amino acids, your cells actually have enzymes inside that'll break them into individuals and put them in your blood.

Perfect. Works great if you start to get a breakdown between those wonderful cells that do all the digesting and absorbing, you know, activity, what will happen then is, is that some of them will have gaps between them.

And so a protein or a big polypeptide that's much more than three of them, you know, acids will slip its way into the bloodstream. And now you have big, you know, either partial proteins or whole proteins from your food.

And those are in your blood. Well, you're circulating immune system has no idea why this is in your blood. And so as that goes in, you can start to develop sensitivity or allergic reactions against those foods, which really like any other allergy, it's a misdirected immune response.

So you developing reactions and inflammatory responses to foods you otherwise should be able to eat is a big part of the leaky gut sort of syndrome it creates.

Then a lot of inflammation. Because if you imagine so, you think of your gut cells and everything on the food digestive side, we've got immune cells. And then on the blood side we've got immune cells.

If we now have these foods we're sensitized to every time we eat them, we're going to have more inflammation, which is just part of your immune response. Right.

So leaky gut can lead us to that very easily. And proteins very easy example of that. Certainly there's other, you know, other things that can go through.

And so people will say, well, how in the world is that break down. Right. Well, kind of the things we talked about earlier. Yes. It's often an autoimmune reaction against those little connective tissue bridges that hold you together, but also inappropriate amounts of the wrong bacteria or viruses in the GI tract can trigger it.

The biofilms that you know, were stages can trigger it. And then just eating foods that are very inflammatory for us, which can be a big problem. We you know, another thing because of course we we eat almost, you know,

everybody eats every day at least once, right?

So we, we kind of don't think about eating. But if we consider that the food is the number one route into the body for it's things like bacteria and stuff.

It's also done one route in for toxic material. And, you know, a lot of food has grown in not the cleanest situation. So you might eat an apple, but that apple may have some, you know, pesticide or curbside.

Those things break down and you create this leaky gut sort of loop that you get into so the gut can break down. The good thing is, the gut is made to repair itself because it's a high traffic area where we're eating all the time.

So the only positive silver lining is your gut can regenerate most of the tissues in your gut on about a 12 plus week cycle. Doesn't mean you get better in 12 weeks. Always.

But but we can work to undo the problems, and then your gut can kind of try and go back to its normal state, which is the goal of the work you and I do.

Right. So basically, if you're not putting things in which harm that you're putting things into, which create healing in the gut, like you said, it is a type tissue, thankfully, that can regenerate itself.

So you get the right environment. You can heal up, then increased intestinal permeability. When people have conditions, say like rheumatoid arthritis, for example, obviously different joints are affected.

You've talked about the proteins and we don't go into this in a whole lot, but there are certain types of parts of bacteria, cell walls that can get into the bloodstream called LPs lipopolysaccharide.

And then they have this fancy term called translocation, which basically way is a fancy way of saying these components of bacteria, cell walls which shouldn't absorb into the bloodstream, do go to different parts of the body, say, like the joints.

Your immune system, like it should, sees them as foreign invaders, creates an inflammatory response. At the root of that. We know in the literature, a lot of people develop leaky gut from chronic use of pain medicines.

The non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and so forth. To talk, talk to us about the common medications you find set people up for leaky gut.

Yeah, certainly when you think of the things that could insult your digestive system and then create this, you know, permeability problem, like you got toxins we mentioned and, you know, inappropriate foods and all that.

But then we often don't think we said we don't often think about what we're eating. We often don't remember. Well, I'm taking this medication because, you know, maybe it's over-the-counter like a non-steroidal entity profit or something, or acetaminophen as a different type of over-the-counter or cold medicine or whatever.

Right. Or maybe you're prescribed something. You don't realize it has a big effect on your digestive system. So each of the types of medications.

Medications That Damage the Gut

But since you brought up, you know, pain medicine is certainly the most common thing. I think probably purchased over the counter. The different types of pain medicine have different effects on the way.

Our digestive system either maintains itself or has good feedback. So nonsteroidal drugs. So the, you know, aspirin and all those other types of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory, you know, you hurt yourself, you take that and makes the pain less.

Well a couple of things about that. One is it does it by blocking a particular part of our inflammatory cascade. And so most people, if they're sensitive, know this, but a lot of people don't.

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory are associated with more gastritis and ulcers. So stomach problems literal stomach problem. Well they do that because to make the acid in your stomach which you need.

And then to make the protective lining, you need this cascade that comes out. That's part of the inflammatory response that helps to maintain. Well, if I block that then suddenly I got acid, no protection or little protection, and now I'm burning myself.

Now there are people like, I'm one of these people. I can't take nonsteroidal drugs because I will. I'll get gastritis and then an ulcer very, very quickly.

Other people don't notice it as much, but it's going on. Take another example, another very commonly used over-the-counter acetaminophen for pain. It's not a nonsteroidal.

It works differently, more in your brain. But what is now becoming more popularized? I've noticed there's a lot more posts about on social media anyway, is a settlement in which you and I have known forever, but it goes into a particular part of our liver to be metabolized.

And it and a really important part of the balance of our body, called glutathione, is sort of one of the big antioxidants, is used up very quickly to metabolize the acetaminophen away.

And so you think, well, okay, it's the liver is set up that way. And the other cells that metabolize. What's wrong with that? Well, it's not that there's something wrong with it.

It's just that, you know, acetaminophen is a fairly new invention by humans, and glutathione has been with us as long as we've been human. And so if I'm burning up the glutathione reserves, I have less and less of the main antioxidant that worked with vitamin C and vitamin E, so then people will think, well, that doesn't sound so good, but it's an antioxidant.

What does that do? Well, newer research, which means 1015 years at this point. But more and more research shows that when you look at the immune cells going out of balance towards, say, autoimmunity and then more likely to attack you, one of the early triggers is if you drop your vitamin C or your glutathione levels, which happens, those immune cells lose their regulation.

And so they might be more likely to attack you. Or let's say you already have some you mentioned rheumatoid arthritis or lupus or something. Glutathione levels go down or vitamin glutathione drop down the T cell balance that maybe was just on the edge.

Now your lupus or your rheumatoid arthritis. Now those T cells go into the fighting mode and they might go harder in attacking whatever the tissue is.

A lot of that's in the all those tissues. So but you know there's and you could bring up you know there's there's thousands of drugs. So each one does it a different way.

But medications because people don't think, oh gosh, I take this for my knee pain. You know, they don't think, oh, that might hurt my gut or it might hurt my kidneys or some other part, because that's obviously that's not what how it's advertised.

You know, this might cause trouble. Also, it's advertised to help you with your pain. So I think you and I see people every day and they might be two, three, four, five things that are not helping the GI tract or the immune system.

And they didn't even they don't even know it. They don't connect it. Yeah, very, very true. Well, maybe in this last part, could you just give some of the gold nuggets that you have found that tens of thousands of patients advising

doctors?

Obviously, we have a lot of tools in nature and help people with autoimmune conditions. And part of that's targeted at healing up their gut health, improving their gut health.

Were some of the gold nuggets, you would say, in terms of helping people with their gut health, and then that helps their autoimmunity. And what kind of time period are you looking at?

Yeah, and I think that's a great place to end up. What I will tell people, especially about GI tract health. So that'll relate to other, you know, interventions like diet and things.

But I'll tell them that that's something regardless of what else we do say with autoimmunity, your gut health is something we have to continually work on because it doesn't heal overnight.

And if we don't clean up the what goes into your digestive system and we don't clean up, maybe the immune response, you know, to those things, we're just sort of letting that system stay dysfunctional, even if we may work on other things to help you.

The other side of it is, is that the more we do, that is good to take away these things that start to break your system down in the gut, inflame it, all of that stuff.

The more of that we remove from you, the faster your gut will heal, because it really is made to heal. Now, if somebody has a short term problem, they just started to get troubles.

Healing the Gut in Autoimmunity

I will always tell them we'll start. We'll start with the basics, which is let's remove anything from your diet that's toxic or inflammatory, or maybe just foods you shouldn't eat or you react badly to.

Let's just get the junk out first, right? And again, that's, you know, lots of things reading labels and not eating fake food and all that. So let's get the junk out first.

Let's maybe do some baseline healing things. So in in our world, in the botanical medicine world, we use herbs like, you know, slippery elm, those, those sort of herbs really helpful.

And I usually tell people at the beginning, let's do three things. One, who use an herb to help kind of protect. That would be a demotion. We'll use a probiotic to just received the good bacteria in, and then we'll do something to feed the cells, which could be something like glutamine or zinc harnessing, you know, those sort of things.

So that way we've got three kind of points of healing because it's great to take the bad guys away. Yeah. But also you got to heal it up some. Look, if you skinned your knuckles, you know, and then you go out every day and you hit them on the ground again, they're never going to heal.

Right? So we want to stop you from skinning them and we want to, you know, bandage them up for a while. So the heal. So the spectrum though is is quite wide.

If we get somebody who's, you know, younger, healthier just started down the trail of kind of some bad digestive things. Maybe they already have a little autoimmunity.

It's it's a project of, you know, 3 to 6 months kind of turn the ship around and then it's maintenance, lifestyle maintenance. You get somebody which we've all had.

They finally find us and they want to alternative integrative approach. But they've had autoimmune for 35 years there. It's more you know tell them it's a little more like a glacier.

We're going to be just working on this slow and steady in the beginning. And, you know, you're going to improve probably every 3 to 6 months, but it'd be in baby steps in the beginning.

And then what happens is once, you know, take the junk out, you get the healing going. Then we work on, you know, the broader immune system. Then they start to heal in bigger steps, you know, once you get past that.

But it does depend quite a bit on how long they've been ill and how much healing we're trying to work on. Absolutely. So maybe in your last just analysis here, for the viewers who have an autoimmune disease or a family member or loved one, how imperative is it that they work on gut health as part of a comprehensive approach to their autoimmune condition?

I mean, I know it can vary depending on the person, but I think from our perspective it's always, you know, got to be part of the equation, but maybe comment a bit more on that with your experience.

Yeah, yeah, I think it's 100% of people really with any autoimmune issue, because even if you're just reductionist about it and say, you know, you've got triggers through your diet and your fluoride and your digestive system, and then you've got a whole immune system living in your digestive system, both of those will trigger your autoimmune at all on their own, let alone all these other things.

So I think digestive repair and being mindful of putting the good things in so that that our natural repair abilities get turned on, but also the removal process of junk.

You know, I think 100% of people with autoimmune imbalance, they need that because let's say, you know, let's say it's a percentage of your problem, which it always is, even if we we work on all other parts of the body and autoimmune response there, if we don't have the gut come back online as it should, it's like a hole in the bucket that's never going to stop draining.

So I don't think it's 100% for all chronic illnesses. Auto immune. Okay. Very good. Well thank you, Doctor Anderson. Thank you so much for your time, your knowledge and again your websites.

Doctor A now.com. And you've got a lot of podcasts. I know which address autoimmune dot health. So certainly people can learn this subject even more in depth from your perspective.

Certainly. Thank you very much.