The Real Key To Longevity: Rewiring Your Lifestyle For A Lifetime Of Health Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Background

Welcome, everybody, to another episode of the Exponential Longevity Summit. I'm your host, Doctor Jeffrey Gladden, and I'm here, as always, discussing how we're leveraging AI to outlive disease and live for a lifetime.

And today, I have the pleasure of having Doctor Robert. Doctor. And today I have the pleasure of having Doctor Robert Lufkin with us. Bob, it's good to see you.

So, hey. Hey, Jeffrey. I'm a huge fan of your work, and and I'm really looking forward to this summit. I can't wait to hear the other speakers you're having.

So this is going to be fun. It should be very fun. Yeah, exactly. I appreciate that. You know, it's interesting. He's been, a physician, a medical school professor at UCLA and USC, and he's also a New York Times bestseller.

He wrote a book, Longevity Secrets that He Learned the Hard Way. And it's really a follow up to another book that he wrote, lies I taught in medical school, which is such a great, such a great, title for a book.

So, Robert, it's really a pleasure to have you here. We're going to jump into this. What do you tell the audience a little bit, about your story? I mean, it's a little unusual for a professor to kind of depart from traditional thought processes around medicine.

Maybe you can bring us up to speed on that. Yeah. I mean, my my book and my my sort of my, my approach is very critical of Western medicine, but I, you know, unlike unlike many people that have this attitude, I have to admit, I'm actually part of the problem because I've spent my whole career as a professor, right, teaching medical students and other, young doctors in training.

Also, you know, my lab is receive millions of dollars in grants from drug companies and big pharma and, you know, food companies, device makers and even the federal government to do research and and and also, I got to practice medicine.

So I'm coming at this from kind of an unusual point, and I am very critical of Western medicine. But I think, my, I have to admit, I'm a fan of Western medicine.

I think in the 20th century, it's transformed our lives largely through public health and, yeah, trouble with the pills and surgeries that were developed then truly make the world a better place.

But the problem is, in the 21st century, we're facing a literally a tsunami of chronic diseases, which, although they were present in the in the 20th century, in the 21st century, they're now in unprecedented numbers, even, you know, even correcting for population.

Why Western Medicine Falls Short for Chronic Disease

And these these are the diseases that literally determine our longevity, because statistics, you know, us will die. You know, heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, mental illness, it goes down the list.

So the problem is when 20th century medicine, I mean, when modern medicine takes the same pills that were so effective in the 20th century and apply tries to apply it to 20, these 21st century chronic diseases, they may work for the symptoms.

They they may be very effective, even lifesaving, the short term. But the deeply disturbing part is they don't control the the progression of most of these diseases where they continue to progress and I came to this, I mean, I'd like to say, you know, hey, I want to make the world a better place, but know I was dragged kicking and screaming into this when I came out with four these chronic diseases myself. Okay, okay.

Just just a couple of years ago and I, I at the time, I, I had young daughters that weren't even in middle school yet. They're still they're still relatively young.

And when I went to my, doctors, they basically prescribed, medicines for me and gave me a prescription for each one of them. Yeah. And, you know, I mentioned to them, I said, hey, what about lifestyle?

You know, and they said, you know, it doesn't really work. You know, you're going to be on these medicines for the rest of your life. So get used to it.

And, you know, I. Do you mind sharing with you, mind sharing what the problems were. Or what? Oh, I'm happy to. Yeah, I'm completely open. I talk about it in the book and everything. Yeah.

So it was at the time it seemed like relatively unrelated pieces. It was a type of arthritis called gout, you know, and and then it was, elevated lipids, sort of high cholesterol, abnormal blood lipids and triglycerides, as well, and then high blood pressure, which most people today have high blood pressure.

So, you know, so I mean, good company and finally, prediabetes, you know, abnormalities of glucose metabolism, type two diabetes. And and you know, I knew it wasn't going to end well.

And so I took those are inter-related. Quite honestly. All of those. Are actually. They could all be seen as kind of one disorder with, multiple manifestations.

Right? So yeah. And that's and you're absolutely right. At the time, I didn't really think of them that way. And the doctors I went to didn't think of it that way.

And many of my colleagues still don't think of them that way. And that's the problem because the the pills and surgery I was given would control the symptoms, but they wouldn't do anything to the root cause, which, you know, as, as we're both talking about is a common metabolic abnormality that's driving all these diseases that, that pills really don't work, work for.

But. Right. There's an even more powerful medicine that that's more powerful than any pills or surgery for most of us. And that's, lifestyle changes. And, by implementing those, I was able to reverse all four of those chronic diseases and basically get off the medications.

My doctor thought the, you know, the machines were the labs were broken and everything like that, but so that's great. So tell us what your lifestyle interventions were.

What did you actually do? Did you lose weight? You exercise. What what what actually. Yeah. Lower. That's what happened. Yeah. Great. Great questions and lifestyle.

It comes down to this the same playbook really. For most people different things may have different weights and and interestingly, of course, it's the same lifestyle playbook in my opinion, is going to reduce our risk of the four diseases I have and even reverse them as well as high as well as, you know, type two diabetes, of course, as well as Alzheimer's disease, mental illness, cancer, cardiovascular disease.

So it's it's really the same thing. But my interventions were first of all, I started off with nutrition and made some changes there. I wasn't overweight, I had a dad bod, but I wasn't, you know, I was it.

Yeah. It doesn't it doesn't take a it doesn't take being really overweight. Yeah. The genetic predisposition, you know, just that abdominal fat is enough for dad bod, so to speak, is enough.

Really? So. Yeah. Yeah. And then I. And then I took a deep sleep. It, took a deep look at sleep, which, you know, as a doctor, I, you know, I, I thought I used to be on call with a beeper 24 hours a day, you know, all the time.

And I thought it. I thought it made me stronger. I thought it was helping my patients when I actually realize, of course, it's making me weaker and, potentially harming my patients.

Lifestyle Changes That Reversed Four Conditions

And so I, I look closely at sleep, not only quantity but quality, and then looked at exercise, both mental and physical exercise. And then also about, tell.

Us about mental versus physical exercise. Describe what you're talking about. They're both both both are important and they're interrelated. Physical exercise is is very important.

You know. What did you. Do? Well, before I was, I was light on strength training, and I didn't have any consistent exercise program, so. But what I doing now is I regularly do, about 10,000 steps, which is about five miles when I, when I walk it every day without you, without stopping.

And I wanted to get more, more of a workout. I'm not I'm not running, but I'm walking but so I, I wanted to get more of a workout. So basically I began rucking.

So I started carrying a 20 pound pack around. And that increased the load a little bit. Going so I do 20 minutes a day of rowing every day now. And, I, you know, I hate I hate rowing.

It's it's boring. But what I do is I, I do it as a treat. I look forward to. I started with five minutes, you know, only once a day, five minutes, then ten minutes, then, you know, and now now it's, 20 minutes.

It's probably probably going to go to 30 minutes, but I, I have like certain TV shows or recordings that I only watch when I'm rowing. So there it is, helps it. And so it.

Looks, you took something that, that you dreaded doing and turned it into a treat by combining it with something you enjoy, right? So that's a good, good take exactly. For the audience.

Yeah. Good for you. And then what about the mental exercise where you started playing games or what did you start doing. Yeah, I mean mental exercises, you know, it's it's all about you know, instead of listening to music play the music, you know, instead of, you know, sing the song, it's participation.

You know, learning a language is a great thing. I started, there's so many apps out there for me. I always wanted to learn Chinese. My wife's from Shanghai, so, you know, know.

So I. I got an app. There's a free app. There are many of them out there. I happened to use one called Duolingo. And I religiously again did five minutes, I mean, five minutes, about five minutes a day, every day.

And I'm now at 1500 days in a row. And the next thing you can do with any language, not just Mandarin Chinese, but when you're learning a language. I took my phone and I switched the, I switch the language to the language that I'm learning.

So now, okay, now when I now when I, I want to set a timer for 20 minutes and I go, hey, Siri, set a timer for 20 minutes, it doesn't do anything because it only understands Mandarin.

So I have to say, Siri thinks I'm joking and, sure, that's okay. It comes out, next. And that's also the next level thing, of course, is setting my my operating system to Mandarin on my laptop and my, my computer's, which I haven't got there yet, but that's okay.

One more thing people can do. Yeah. That's great. No, that's really awesome. I think I think the other thing that

strikes me about this is that you figured out a way to actually do these things and kind of incorporate them into your life, right?

So in other words, you're kind of killing two birds with one stone on many situations, like when you're doing your walking, you're probably thinking about problems that you're working on or going into a meditative state.

At some point when you're exercising, you're listening to things you're interested in or watching something that you find entertaining. And so I think, I think this idea of kind of, stacking, you know, activities to where everything doesn't have to be sequential, you can kind of parallel process this, and you find that you have time to get everything done that you want to get done that way.

That's that's really cool. Yeah. Yeah. Totally. The walking I mean, it takes a couple of hours really. And I instead of the other thing I do is I don't some people like they work out, you know, once a day for an hour in the gym and they kill themselves and then they go sit for 15 hours, you know, so what I do is I, I walk for three miles to a Starbucks, and then I work there for a couple hours, and then I walk another couple miles to another Starbucks. And I work there and.

Okay. Yeah. And so it kind of spread it out throughout the day. And then I roll and, you know, do the other stuff too. Yeah. That's great I think I think it's really if you're thinking about this and listening to this, the important thing is to look at your own life, look at your own day, and start to architected in a way where it makes sense, where you where you ultimately you find joy in what you're doing, but you also have the ability to put these pieces together.

It's really just like a puzzle, and it's it's very doable if you just look at it like, oh, this is a puzzle. How can I make this fun? How can I make it joyous?

And how do I actually feel better and energized at the end of the day than exhausted, wasted and stressed out? Right? So yeah, but. That's such a good point.

And it speaks to the third thing stress and purpose. And, you know, having having joy in our lives. Kind of looking forward to it. Like when I changed the food I ate, I wasn't going on a diet.

I was I was eating in a nutritionally healthy way that allow me to live longer. And I love I love bagels and donuts and sugar and everything else. But I know that's more likely to cause a heart attack than a steak is right.

And and I love those, but I love my kids more, so I, I, I gave them up because I'd rather lived to see my kids. Yeah. I think that I think that's another really critical point is that, if people are doing this and they feel like it's pointless, like there's no reason to do it apart from somebody told me to do it, it's unsustainable.

Completely unsustainable. But if you're actually if you have two things, one, if you find joy in doing it, that's an end in itself. But the other is you realize there's connected to this bigger purpose, right?

I want to I want to expand my influence in the world. I want to expand my influence in the in my family circle, in my friend circle, or whatever it is I want to continue to contribute in all these ways.

Then all of a sudden it's like, oh, I have so many reasons to do this. How can I not do this? Right? So that that's such a such an important point. The idea of of purpose and why we want longevity.

Purpose, Joy, and Reframing Longevity

Because I talk to people about it and I go, hey, you know what? You have the potential to adding an extra 30 or 40 years on your life, and it's only going to get more and more as this technology, you know, as this conference is showing, is exploding.

And, and they go and they go, wow, you know, I've just retired. So what am I going to do? Well, like I play golf, you know, and I go see my group, my kids, my grandkids.

That's great. But people start thinking of that and they go, wow, you know, and no, no shade on golf. I'm a miniature golfer myself, but, okay. But the idea of playing golf for 40 years, you know, it's going to get old.

Even senior two kids, they're going to hate you, you know, for a while. Well, they're going to grow up, quite honestly. So. Yeah. And so I think I think the way we look at this is not just, you know, an extra 30 years on the golf course or 30 years hanging around our descendants.

But we way I try and look at it and is to imagine the years from 20 to 50 and how we all changed as people. We we contributed to the world. We grew, we became completely different people.

So now let's say you go from 60 or 65, you retire, go to 95. So imagine what you could do in those 30 years. Not just right, playing golf or hanging out with your kids, but actually growing as a person, reinventing yourself.

Have a whole new life, a whole new purpose, and really make the world a better place. We can contribute so much by being elders with wisdom. There is.

There is important knowledge that elders have and and we can play a really important role in reinventing ourselves and doing doing something else. I'm not against retirement, but, you know, Yeah, we're not big fans of retirement because it really is associated with most people slowing down and getting old, kind of sort of in their mindset.

But to your point, making transitions right from one thing to another. Now that makes a lot of sense. You know, I think it's interesting for me. And as I think about it, a lot of folks go through life.

And I was like this at one point where you feel like it's your goal in life to actually find your answers. And as, as a physician, as I was trained, I was basically trained to have a certain set of answers.

And the doctors that you went to see have a certain set of answers, and we end up getting married to those answers. And yet all innovation, right, all innovation, all creativity comes from asking questions, not from the answers.

Right answers actually put people into a defensive posture. Okay. Well, I don't like your answer. Well, now I've got to defend it. Now I've got to now I've got to bolster it.

Now I've got to say that you're wrong, right. I'm. I got to make you wrong so I can be right. And and when you when you drop your attachment to answers and you attach yourself to the questions, how do I live you on for a lifetime, right?

How do I make 130? How do I do these things? How do I continue to be vibrant? How do I continue to be a creative, loving force in the world that's creating new ideas and contributing as opposed to getting married to an answer of I like golf and fishing, and that's what I'm going to do.

You see, it just changes your whole world. All of a sudden. It's like the next decade is more exciting than any decade in your life. Not to mention the next week. Right.

So I think I think that shift in mindset is critical. Just just a simple thing that the the best is yet to come, that we all have our best years ahead.

And it's not it's not a downhill course. That's right. You know, we should look forward to it, man. This is going to be so much fun, I can't wait. Yeah, absolutely.

Well, tell us a little bit about. So you stop taking the medicines for your chronic disorders. Let's call it, but you're sounds like you're maybe still taking some things to, advance your longevity specifically or the things that you're doing you want to share with us, maybe. Yeah.

Of course. Well, I think, first of all, all the lifestyle things that, you know, that you talk about, that I talk about, you

know, the very, very similar themes in my book, the things that I did.

I believe those are foundational. And we need to we need to correct those and get those a good foundation. And then on top of that, we can build and we can add things and, and some of the, I mean, longevity space is just, you know, exploding so much knowledge much.

Right. It's it's hard to keep up with it now. And so, I mean, I, I'm not against I'm not against taking pills, I'm just against taking pills that only treat the symptoms and don't treat the root cause.

And so, some of the pills I'm taking for longevity is, you know, the enter a pill rapamycin. Okay. That I take, I take them back for form and for, for longevity.

I take a sort of I'm experimenting, experimenting with a lot of different things, adding different types of supplements and kind of a longevity stack that I've been working on and trying things, and it's great.

The problem with that, of course, is it's hard to tell. It's hard to tell the effect necessarily. Or you're I'm changing so many things at once that, you know, it's an and a one and but but I feel great.

I've, you know, I've never felt better. Yeah. Things are good. Yeah. I think it's good to feel great. I think this is where getting really high quality testing, right, where you can actually measure your saw self across this mosaic of ages as we refer to it.

Right. What's my telomere age? What's my immune system age? What's my DNA methylation age. You know, what's my glycan age? You know, you know what what do I what's my senescent cell burden actually look like?

Right.

Longevity Stack and Emerging Therapies

And if I'm alternating between, basically blocking them to which, of course, we need them to for growth and development and cell growth, etc., and insulin and growth and growth hormone will IGF one will actually activate them to rapamycin will block it, because it's been shown that blocking mTOR, can improve longevity in rodents.

I think it's there's still some question in humans as to how that's going to play out, but nonetheless that's a good strategy. But then you don't want to do that all the time because you want to have you want to have them a part of the time when you're taking your metformin, you're activating the Ampk.

Ampk is the other side of the the teeter totter from mTOR. And so activating that is now activating your sirtuins. And basically DNA repair and autophagy and things that you need to kind of rejuvenate and regenerate, if you will.

So I think it's important for the audience to understand that what he's doing is actually hitting two sides of the teeter totter, and it's best to kind of do that.

Impulses on either side so that you're either on one side of the teeter totter or the other, but not trying to be on both sides at the same time. Right? So, we find a lot of wisdom in that.

And then of course, the cardio that he's, that he's getting in there is activating his Ampk also. Right? So, it's it's it's a good strategy. Yeah. Nice.

Yeah. I mean, in there, you know, there's so many things like biohacking, things that I'm, you know, dabbling in that so many people are involved with, with you know, plasmapheresis plus.

Yeah, we do that. Stem cells, exosomes and yeah, I know you have a lot of work in that area. So, and, and I mean, the papers coming out are just fascinating.

And the one you may have talked about already with, partial epigenetic programing of chemically induced pluripotent stem cells. Yes. Type one diabetic. IC.

Yeah. And of one. But after a year, they were able to make these islet cells under the abdominal wall that basically got the person off insulin with type one diabetes, which is a, you know, unusual kind with insulin deficiency.

But, you just it's like mind blowing. They just reverse type one diabetes with stem cells for the first time. Also, there's a paper on that. So, you know, the things that, that you and I were taught were impossible or becoming possible all the time.

And we see that like with regards to cardiovascular disease or insulin resistance, I mean, we reversing stuff all the time. And yet people are, you know, still unaware of it so to speak.

So it's really it's super exciting medicine to practice. Yeah. Yeah. And it, it really it really bothers me that, you know, that our trusted medical institutions that most people go to for advice and I'll just pick one, I'll say the American Diabetic Association. Sure.

When they their recommendation is to treat type two diabetes, which, you know, we're heading up to, you know, half the population getting it before long.

And it's a gateway for you know, it is the medical gateway. Disorder right into so. Many other diseases. Insulin resistance. So it's true. Yeah. And so type two diabetes is their recommendation is to basically, you know, cut down on sugars but don't cut them out.

If you eat sugars cover it with insulin. And the problem is in my opinion and and there's there's evidence to show that we look at controlled studies in the, in the book as well, that when you treat type two diabetes with insulin, it becomes a chronic progressive disease.

In other words, you go on to get number one cause of surgical amputations is diabetes number one cause renal failure. Kidney failure is number one, cause of retinal blindness in young people's diabetes.

And on type two diabetes, Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease. Yeah. And and people. That's the recommendation to go on these drugs and eventually insulin to manage the type two diabetes.

But I what is not emphasized to people is that with a lifestyle change by primarily nutrition, but other factors as well, it's possible to reverse type two diabetes in the majority of people in controlled studies, you know, virtually no others have done this.

But the interesting thing is when you reverse it with lifestyle, it's no longer a progressive disease or you've stopped it. That's right. You take two people, put one on insulin, that person on insulin.

The insulin is going to save their life. They're not going to die from, you know, hypoglycemia. Right. But they're going to, you know, what they're looking forward to is amputations, renal failure, blindness, on and on, Alzheimer's, heart disease, cancer, tragic mental illness.

It's tragic and and it's tragic that we can everyone do the lifestyle. It's right. It's tragic that we equate that with treating the disease right. It's almost like we're just going to keep you alive and then we're retaliating it.

Really? That's right. And then once you fall apart, it's really quite tragic to your point. You know, with some of the lifestyle changes around food, diet and exercise.

We've done a couple of shows now on, the value of fasting and five day mimicking fasting and doing that on for diabetics, kind of on a sequential basis and having a dramatic impact, even rebooting beta cell function, which, you know, once they once those are shot, people feel like they're shot.

But we actually see those start to reverse. So if you're listening to this, understand of what we're talking about here is not just trivial. It's actually more powerful than any drug your doctor can give you.

So pretty exciting stuff. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I mean, the the other thing I learned going through this journey was even though I'm a doctor, I now believe doctors don't make us healthy.

Doctors just make us less sick. And that's right. The lifestyle changes, the lifestyle choices we make will overpower almost any pillar surgery that we're given.

And yeah, so if we want to make true change in our life, we have to do it with lifestyle because no doctor can fix it with a pillar surgery, at least at this point.

That's right. Yeah. And I think lifestyle, just from my perspective too, is kind of like the gateway to longevity in and of itself. It's not enough. It's a gateway into health, but long, true longevity.

Where we live young for a lifetime requires more. It does require actually doing some of these things. Where you start to really turn back the clock, whether it's, you know, rejuvenation procedures like plasmapheresis or young plasma or stem cells or things like that, there are things that need to be tacked on top of that.

If we're really going to go back in time. And it's exciting to see that developing as well. So. Yeah, I mean, it's just, out of all the areas where we're seeing progress, the longevity is the longevity.

Science is the most amazing. It's like every every week there's a new paper or something. Right? It's such, such an exciting time to be in this space.

It's, you know, like, you know, like, people talk about longevity, escape velocity. And. That's right. Certainly it's it's not, not unrealistic. I don't think it's that far off.

I think it's in the next 3 to 5 years personally. I mean, when you look at all the things that we're currently doing and the rate at which we're learning, and then you throw in AI, which becomes, you know, artificial general intelligence pretty quickly, and then ASI, which is artificial superintelligence, all of a sudden you have enough horsepower here to actually figure this out, right?

It's not. At the end of the day, it's a finite problem. It's not an infinite problem. And I think it will have a solution. So I'm super optimistic about all of it.

Yeah. Yeah. This is this is just such an amazing time. Very cool. Well, Rob, it's been such a pleasure to chat with you. I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us.

Thank you. Oh. Oh, thanks so much, Jeff. And like I say, I'm going to be I'm going to be looking forward to hearing the other speakers too in this summit.

Yeah, absolutely. You'll enjoy that. All right. Well have a great rest of your day. Thanks. You too. All right.