Uncover The Link Between Mold And Fertility Transcript

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Introduction to Mold and Fertility

Hey, welcome back to the Beyond Infertility Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Aumatma, and I am honored to introduce you guys to Dr. Nafysa Parpia She is a naturopathic doctor.

She's the director of naturopathic medicine at Gordon Medical, and she specializes in treating patients with complex, chronic illness who have been diagnosed with things like autoimmune conditions, fibromyalgia, long COVID and mast cell activation syndrome.

Often these diagnoses are caused by a combination of tick borne illnesses, environmental exposures and mold and mycotoxins exposure. And of course, as with everything else, diet, lifestyle, stress and emotions.

So today we're going to get into how mold impacts fertility. We're going to talk a little bit more about these other chronic things that may be hidden under the surface that we just don't realize are affecting our hormones and fertility as much as they actually are.

So join me for this awesome conversation with Dr. Parpia. Dr. Nafysa, it's so great to have you here today. I am very excited to get into what I think is one of these like hidden things under the surface that is affecting people that are trying to conceive.

But most of the time they're not not even aware that it's affecting them and that is mold. So let's get into what is it? What is it? How do we know that it affects fertility?

What impacts is it having? Absolutely. So thank you for having me. First of all, so excited to be here. Now I'm thinking about people who have done every thing right, everything, right, right to get pregnant.

So they've been to a fantastic naturopathic doctor or a medicine doctor. They've had their hormones balanced. They've had their diet, their lifestyle evaluated, optimized.

They've had their microbiome balanced as well. And they should be getting pregnant. They're in the reproductive years, maybe even for women. Their periods are are at a normal cycle.

So why are they still not getting pregnant? We've even tried IVF. Still no pregnancy. Right. And it can be so devastating. And so there are many reasons, I think, that could be underneath why someone is still not getting pregnant, despite everything having gone to all the right fertility doctors, even fertility clinics, IVF may be right, still nothing.

How Mold and Mycotoxins Disrupt Hormones

So one of the things to consider is mold and mycotoxins. Mycotoxins are the toxins that mold create. You can think of them as a waste product. I know.

I know you know this. I even read your awesome blog on this. The talking to our our our audience who may not know. So the the mycotoxins can create and the molds themselves can create inflammatory cytokines or actually our body will create the inflammatory cytokines when we when we're exposed.

Now, inflammation is meant to be transient. It's actually the mitochondria's first step in the healing cycle. So the mitochondria will create inflammation.

They'll it'll create localized oxidative stress. It'll communicate to the surrounding mitochondria as well that this is supposed to be happening. And that's you're talking about the cell danger response here.

Right. So this is part of CDR1 where inflammation is heightened, oxidative stress is heightened, and it's absolutely normal. And it should just be transient.

But when we have triggers that are constant mold and mycotoxins is a very, very, very common one, people often don't consider it, but they can they can trigger inflammation to now be consistent.

So these patients are stuck in a loop of inflammation and oxidative stress, and that inflammation can affect fertility. That's that's the take home point, you know, that the take home message for for our patients listening today it's inflammation that's the driver it can disrupt our hormonal system literally.

It could disrupt the hormones. It can affect the development of eggs and sperm. Some some of the mycotoxins are estrogen moneymakers. So then we can get astringent overload, mycotoxins and inflammatory cytokines can cross the blood brain barrier and then interfere with the hypothalamus.

That's our master hormone regulatory system. So there's so many different ways that that I'm sure you've got someone talking about mycotoxins and or sorry about fertility and the microbiome.

Well, mycotoxins are more can affect the microbiome and therefore affect fertility. So there's so many different ways by which mycotoxins and mold, when it's a consistent exposure over time, can interfere with fertility.

You know was thinking about it yeah. I feel like it's really challenging for people to like wrap their head around mold, right? Like, oh, it's this little spot in the corner of my closet.

Like, do I really need to sweat this thing? And or they just don't even notice it till it's too late. They've been exposed for so many years. And I live in Texas where it's it's kind of like wet and humid and and like they're building these houses for months.

Right. And it rains on the house. Like, what are they doing to dry out the wood? So there are all these little things that can be creating like the environment in which mold is more likely to grow.

And then we have the how our body responds, needs or interacts to that mold. What you said about inflammation is interesting because is this let's suppose that they are having that cell response and the inflammation is really there to like kind of support the healing process.

It just kind of goes awry and keeps being inflamed in that place. Will we see markers related to inflammation be elevated or not Always. Right. Okay. So I'm talking about this is a really, really good question, actually.

So I was just talking about the cell danger response and this is the work of Dr. Robert Naviaux and he's a dear friend of ours at our clinic and he did research on our patients and chronic fatigue syndrome.

And he was looking at metabolomics in his lab at UC San Diego. And he's an expert on mitochondria in his lab.

Testing for Mold Exposure and Hidden Sources

He's able to see certain certain metabolic markers. Actually, this isn't available to the public yet. This is about how we can be stuck in different stages of the cell danger response and in the cycles of healing so that it's not on our fingertips yet.

But there are other inflammatory markers that we can look at now. I know a lot of people are interested in, you know, if people who are well versed in mobile mycotoxins, they're interested in Dr.

Shoemaker's work and I think Dr. Shoemaker for bringing mold and mycotoxins illness to the awareness of of the public and the doctors decades ago. Right.

But when we're looking at the the Sears markers. Right. His markers, what I know is that they're not only directed

towards Mycotoxins and molds, and a lot of people think that that, oh, if my if my MSH or my VEGF or my TNF, my certain markers are are off, then it means I have mold illness.

That means you might have mold illness. But but going back to that, talk about inflammatory cytokines, really, there are many, many insults that can cause this inflammation to go awry in the system.

It's not just muscle when it comes to looking at inflammatory markers and mold of mycotoxins. I don't have any diagnostics that are going to direct me only to that, but there are other diagnostics we can use to understand mold and mycotoxins.

Yeah. So what are some of your favorites? Yeah. Okay, so when I'm thinking about mold issues and people, I want to before I go to my favorite diagnostics, I want to go back and acknowledge something you said that's really, really important.

And it's about people getting exposed to it in the first place. Because what I worry about in this interview is that I'm going to start getting all technical and people might be like, Does this pertain to me?

Right? So before before I get pregnant. Sure. I just want to make sure that people understand that. Yeah, it could very well pertain to you. You were just before we got on, we were just talking about Texas, right?

How people are building and and then it gets damp and and it's a new build. And you would expect there to be mold there. But it's very, very possible.

So under other areas, we can get exposed to mold. You know, it's usually typically in the home and it's usually from water damage. I've had patients where they you know, I asked them, have you lived in a home where there's been water damage?

And they say, no, I press on the question, how about like ten years ago, about 15 years ago, people would say, Oh, yeah, there was a wall that leaked behind the shower maybe.

Or, Oh, yeah, the dishwasher leaked or Oh yeah, my sister used to flood the toilet over and over again, growing up just for fun. And then we would get and I'm not joking.

A patient just told me this the other day. Right? And we would get floods all the time. Well, there's so many reasons that people can get exposure to mold.

It could be in the next room and then it's circulating throughout the house. So it's just so common. I want people to to think about this and keep it in their minds if they've done everything they need to to get pregnant and still it's not happening.

That's when we need to start looking at things that are. That are a little, a little, a little. I'd say, more individualized to the patient's exposures or not just their lifestyle, their diet and their hormones.

So back to diagnostics. So how do I test for it in the home? The first thing I do is I like patients to do an early test. E r am I environmental relative mold index test?

It gives us a sense of if there's a high level of mold in the house or the car, wherever it's expected. Is that the one you're testing like dust around your home? Yes.

Yeah, that's the one. Yeah. You're testing dust. You can do a vacuum or a swipe. So there's that. If something if it looks high, I'm actually going to have an indoor environmental professional look at this.

There's some that I really like. I really like the work of Michael Schranz. Actually, he's in Texas and he'll work with our patients from all over. And he's to me, he's the gold standard in this.

So fine if I'm expecting something in the house because sorry, suspecting more than the house, because the roomie is high, because the patient's telling me about this, then I'm going to say, okay, take this lab, talk to Michael Schranz or any other good IEP, and then let's see from there how much this is an issue.

So that's about mold in the home. But then we want to look at diagnostics of the patient. So I'm thinking about many things. Is the person allergic to the mold spores themselves?

Are they allergic to the mycotoxins again, the toxins that the mills create? Okay. Is there an exposure? Are there allergies? And then where is it located? Right.

We talked about an external location in the home or somewhere where there's been water damage, but we can also have it inside our bodies.

Symptoms That Suggest Mold Is Involved

We know that we can have it in our gut, in our sinuses, on our skin, but also in the biofilm, which is a carbohydrate, which matrix that microbes create to live inside, to protect themselves so we can have bacteria, parasites, viruses, molds, all living together in one community that they've created.

It's called biofilm. They could be living in their mold. Don't infect cells the same way same viruses do, but they can they can colonize these areas of the body.

So these are the things I'm going to test for, right. Allergies and location in the body. Yeah. That's a very specific so and that also sounds like a fair bit of testing.

Do the people that come to see you, are they already aware that they have mold and they're being impacted by it or are they just like we have these random things happening and no one else can figure out what's going on? It's happened.

Have some people come and they say, I know that mold is an issue and they've been to many more doctors before. Some people say, I, you know, I've even had the mold treated, but I'm still sick as though I still have an issue with mold.

Some people come in and they have everybody has mysterious symptoms. So some people will come in with mysterious symptoms. They have no idea that it could be mold or any of the other chronic infections and environmental toxins and other issues that I'm looking at.

So it's kind of tap and a half. Yeah. Okay. Are there any things that stand out that especially couples on the fertility journey they might be noticing?

And I think you talked a little bit in the beginning about they've done all the treatments, they've been to the natural pads and the fertility clinics and the IVF clinics, and they've kind of done all the things that they know to do for fertility.

But are do they ever like is there a theme or like a they often present with a certain set of symptoms that tips you off of like, oh, this is really potentially a mold issue.

Right? This is this is such a good question. So if somebody has done all the everything's right, the great naturopathic, solid naturopathic care or seen a good function that doctor and still nothing and they're asymptomatic, meaning they don't have any other symptoms except for infertility.

Usually that infertility is is linked to issues in their endocrine system. Right. So I'm definitely going to test their endocrine system. That could be one one way in which someone is having issues with fertility, but the symptoms don't seem to be very, very obvious.

Right? Oh, my. My periods are a little bit off course. People tend to only think about it in women. People don't think about it in men. I think that's a big overlooked piece as well.

But right now I'm talking about women and men after. So for women, it's often the when they're only thinking about fertility, it might just be their hormones that are off.

So I'm going to test that. I'm going to balance the hormones, but I'm a lot of people not going to say a lot of people, 98% of people who come to my clinic who need help, they have many, many mysterious symptoms.

They have symptoms like brain fog, joint pain, muscle pain, GI tissue, GI issues, neurologic issues, immune system dysregulation. They have a hyperactive immune system and a weak immune system simultaneously.

So hyperactive meaning that they're they're hypersensitive to things have got mass cell activation syndrome. They've got autoimmune conditions on one hand.

On the other hand, their immune system is too weak to mount an appropriate immune response. They've got other autoimmune conditions. They've got a lot of infections.

They've got all these all of these symptoms and reasons, multiple reasons for all of these symptoms. At this point, it's not only mold. I have a hard time believing that it's only mold, especially because people who come in symptomatic like this system, symptoms that have crossed every single system of their body, it is mold is often a factor.

But there are other factors involved as well. And that's one thing I want to make sure people understand. It's never just one symptom. It's never just one one diagnostic, never just one reason.

Right? Yeah. So what are some of the other things that go along with mold. Lyme disease, tick borne diseases, something that we see go hand in hand. So most people who have an issue with Lyme disease, it's very often that they have a mold issue going on.

At the same time, I like to tell people there are five reasons you get sick, okay? And I'm going to put infertility in this category as well. So I tell people it's diet, lifestyle, structure, integrity issues, infections and toxins.

No diet and lifestyle and structural integrity issues is is where most naturopathic medicine doctors do do so much works, such great work. Those three things can usually fix fix and infertility problem right when those sometimes right when when when those three things are not are not resolved things are balanced and still there's problems.

And I start to think of infections and toxins. So Lyme and co-infections and thinking of Lyme bartonella. But these year, like, yeah, tick-borne relapsing fever.

I'm thinking of a high viral load in these people. Epstein-Barr virus, cytomegalovirus, HSV six, HSV one into HSV seven. So these are very, very common viruses, other bacteria, mycoplasma, chlamydia, pneumonia.

These are actually viruses and bacteria that can affect the nervous system. They go hand in hand with tick borne disease and hand in hand with mold illness.

Mold, Sinus Infections, and Brain-Hormone Effects

It's in my practice, it's very rare that I'm seeing somebody who has an issue with mold that doesn't have some variation of all of these other toxins.

Okay. I mean, of of infections is well, they have the high toxin load, high glyphosate microplastics, other solvents, fungicides. So I'm looking at all of these things.

But what's really important is we're talking about the people who have mysterious symptoms, right? You do all the

things you're supposed to do to fix the fertility and mysterious symptoms.

And still they're stuck in these with these mysterious symptoms. So. Yeah, yeah, yeah. In terms of men, which you mentioned this a few minutes ago, um, men don't get paid a lot of attention to, especially when it has to, when it comes to fertility.

So I'm curious how you see this impacting men and maybe like what is it look like in men? Does it look different to have mold or mycotoxins infection versus the women?

Or or is it just as like red, red? You say these. You're right. Like, I love that word. Random. The symptoms are so random. Right? I have brain fog. I have aches and pains in my body.

I have diarrhea, a lot of diarrhea, gas, bloating. I have OCD or I'm prone to anxiety. I can't seem to control my nervous system. These are those random symptoms.

They seem to be an illness where those symptoms that I just listed will be across the board, men and women. Now, women, we can we can track their cycles.

Right. They have a cycle, though. And so we can tell with women, okay, you have PCOS or your periods are too frequent. They're every two weeks or even reproductive years and no periods.

So this is how this is how it shows up hormonally for women. And it's very, very specific because it's around their menstrual their menstrual cycle for men.

There's no specific way around their hormones that we can know, except for if we test for them. I'm going to take that back. Okay. A lot of young men don't have a libido or they have erectile dysfunction.

So that that's a way that we can understand that that hormones are an issue for young men. My young men patients also have a lot of chronic fatigue. That's that's about inflammation, that's disrupting the hormones and inflammation that's disrupting multi systems of the body.

But but I think about the information that chronic exposure to more than mycotoxins create, it can disrupt the microbiome. We have the direct hormone mimicking effects, immune dysregulation, all of this, it happens in men and women.

But what I'm seeing on the test with men is I'm seeing my young men population. I'm talking about men in their thirties, in their twenties with testosterone levels of an old men, low testosterone and high estrogen.

So I know that it's it's the multitude of causes, including mold of mycotoxins, which can cause this kind of hormonal dysregulation and those symptoms that we'll see in men the lack of libido, the exhaustion, erectile dysfunction, in addition to all the other random symptoms that I was talking about.

Yeah. Yeah. Can we talk about one specific symptom with the chronic sinus infections? What is what's the relationship? What's the connection with fertility? Right.

How random does that seem like? Affections affecting fertility, please. Right. Well, it's possible. I'm talking about people who have chronic sinusitis, chronic inflammation in the sinuses.

Sometimes people don't even know it. Okay. But just like certain intra nasal medications can can bypass the blood brain barrier and end up in the brain.

Well, Mycotoxins the toxins from mold and the inflammatory cytokines that they can stir up in our immune system that can cross that cross that they can bypass the blood brain barrier and end up in our brain.

So there's three routes. So there's the olfactory nerve which sits right.

Creating a Personalized Treatment Plan

Right here at the at the base of our sinuses, and it actually connects right up to the hypothalamus. Mycotoxins can cross the blood brain barrier via the lymphatics that are that are right next to the trigeminal nerve.

And then also through this rich vasculature network in in the back over our sinuses. So there's three routes of entry for mycotoxins and for inflammatory cytokines from the sinuses to the brain.

And so now if the hypothalamus is affected, then that is our our our master regulatory master hormone regulatory system in the brain. So, you know, when I test people's sinuses and I find funguses in there and I find that they have hormonal dysregulation, I'm definitely thinking about these things.

And you're saying that you test like do a swab or something in the sinus. Right? Right. So where is the head here? Okay. Yeah. Okay. So I like there's two tests I can I can give you test names out here, right?

So, so there's two tests I really like. One is called micro gene and one is called is by microbiology detects. They're both they're both sinus swabs and they're swabs not used often enough.

Right. When people are considering mold and and so they they can they test for bacteria and funguses can test for viruses. We can't test for mycotoxins the toxins created by the moles, but we test for biofilm.

And if funguses are there and biofilm is there, I'm pretty sure mycotoxins are there as well. I can also test for mycotoxins loads in the body. I can test for allergic responses to mycotoxins.

You bet on testing all these things. And and so I'm putting all the, the random mysterious pieces together. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So I, I'm very familiar with Microchip and we use them for rational microbiome.

But it's fascinating because the chronic sinus infections would you put allergies are like allergy type symptoms comes into that bucket if they if they're just like chronic.

Yeah. No allergy anymore. Is this all the time? Yeah, I would say I would say so because with those allergies, we have mast cells on a hair trigger. Right.

So they're releasing histamine and a thousand other chemicals constantly. So their chronic chronic allergies can definitely create inflammatory chemicals that can cross the blood brain barrier and do what I just talked about.

It's inflamed certain areas of the brain. So definitely considering that. I'll just like so much to consider every time I talk to one of you, like mold experts.

Mold and toxins experts. Oh, my God. There's so, so much. But I just want to make sure our audience knows. Right, that that I don't go chasing these diagnoses unless I have to.

In fact, I tell people, unless you have if you have not worked with great naturopathic doctors, if you have not worked for your primary care doctor, if you have not gone to specialists, do those things first because you can be helped, right?

If you've been to all those places and you're still having random symptoms, then then come to me then that makes sense, right? So I'm talking about, you know, casting a wide net of diagnostics for people where things are very, very mysterious and they have to move to get help.

So I imagine that this like it could be a big can of worms. Like maybe there's mold, there's this other infection here. There's some other infection there.

How do you go about creating a plan or a protocol for someone who's got all of these different things going on? Okay. So the first thing I'm doing is that the plan, the protocol is definitely all about the person, because now when

it's when it's complex chronic illness, the illness is the person's own shtick.

It's different for each person. So it's really about inflammation, meeting the genes, right? So I like to look at their genes. I like the Intelex DNA tests looking at different genes in combination with each other, in the different systems of the body and then how those genes actually interact with each other to make somebody more vulnerable to certain illnesses.

So I'm looking at their genes. I'm looking at all those infections that I named, okay? I'm looking at different environmental toxins and looking at structure, integrity issues.

So I'm working on treating in that person the five the five reasons they first got sick, right? Diet, lifestyle, structural integrity, infections, toxins.

But these five issues that make people sick create inflammation, and then they create downstream illnesses, secondary illnesses like methyl activation syndrome, autoimmune conditions, long COVID post-treatment, Lyme, right.

Those secondary issues are really about inflammation, meeting the genes. And the first thing I'm doing after I've got all the diagnostics I've taken a really good history on the person is I'm I'm trying to block that inflammation blocking the inflammatory pathways that's step one in the biochemistry in their biochemistry.

I'm also looking at their nervous system, so putting my hands on them or we have wonderful healers and body workers, amazing healers who work at our clinic and working on and on restoring safety in in the nervous system.

These people need that kind of healing work to these patients. Everything represents danger to their immune system. They're stuck in that loop of inflammation and these danger signals right?

So between blocking the inflammatory pathways and working with their nervous system dysregulation through different healing modalities, that's step one.

Right. And then and then I'm looking at detoxification strategies that are pertinent to each patient. So if they have a high load of metals or glyphosate or whatever it is, and their genes of detoxification are are not optimal.

Right. I'm starting with detox slow so I don't aggravate their system. And then finally, I'm bringing in the treatment of of the multitude of chronic infections.

But guess what? It's often that once I've blocked the inflammatory pathways and I started detoxing, the patient in the patient is, is doing a lot of nervous system regulation and healing work.

The immune system starts to balance and and I can be I don't need to be as aggressive with the treating of infections because because we've got the nervous system and the immune system to be balanced.

So it's different for each people for for each, for each person. But when it comes to the treatment of molds and mycotoxins, I'm using binders to bind the mycotoxins I'm using minerals and amino acids and B vitamins because they're cofactors for the detox pathways.

So I'm giving that to them. I'm also if there's mold colonization, I'm getting antifungal herbs or medications to treat those funguses as well.

Complex Chronic Illness and Where to Find Help

So there's so much to balance. It's kind of like pickup sticks and is different for each patient depending on their vulnerabilities. Yeah. Yeah, I can imagine. This is like such a I feel like by the time that someone is struggling with so many different things, it's definitely a whole like it's a process.

It's not just like, what's the one thing that's going to fix my problem or sometimes actually I tell them I wish I could wave a magic wand and say, you're fix like we just fix this one thing.

But it's so many different systems that are out of balance and the systems all interact with each other, right? Like the nervous system in the gut, interact with each other and they interact with the immune system and so forth, so, so, so forth with, with all of the systems in the body that I can't just fix one thing in this patient population.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, so amazing. Thank you for the amazing work that you're doing. I feel like it's so needed and we need people that specialize in this because this is not like everyone doesn't need it and everyone care.

Like not all naturopathic doctors should be working with this, right? Like it's a very specific kind of situation that people are struggling with. And it's really wonderful to know that you're you're there to support them in these, like, very complex scenarios.

Thank you. Thank you so much. It's it's true. Every naturopathic doctor and functional medicine doctor, we're not trained to do these things. This is this is this is where we've had to have lots of extra training and mentorship and years of it, years of right and experience.

And and it's a very it's a niche. That's what I want listeners to know. It's very much a niche. So yeah. Absolutely. But yeah, where can people find out about you?

Yeah. So we're at Gordon Medical. I'm at Gordon Medical and the website is GordonMedical.com and. We're located in the San Francisco Bay area for these complex issues.

People do come from all over the world, all over the country. Yeah. Beautiful. Well, thank you again for being here. Thank you for sharing your wisdom.

And for those of you listening in, if this is something that you're struggling with, reach out to me. Reach out to Dr. Nafysa. We're here to support you.

And thank you for being with us today. Thank you.