What China’s Medical System Gets Right—and Why It Matters Transcript

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Introduction to The Balancing Point

First thing that happens is they get a blood draw. Then they go and sit ah in an audience and they're exposed to several different lectures. The day I was there, they had an exercise physiology person who they, every month they get a new exercise to try out. This particular day, it was line dancing. And uh boy, you go to the parks in the mornings and retirement age is much, much younger in China. And you'll see huge core. cohorts of women doing line dancing out in the parks with their little portable music instruments. And so that's the value of getting together is uh you're talking about your condition, you're seeing doctors, and you're creating cohort in every project, whether it's weight loss, blood sugar control. If you belong to a cohort, exercise in particular, you're much more likely to be successful.

Hi, and welcome to The Balancing Point. I'm Dr. John Neters, and I'm here to make traditional Chinese medicine, functional medicine, and integrative health simple, practical, and fun, so you can restore balance, boost vitality, and enjoy a healthier life every single day.

Hi, this is Dr. John. Back again with another episode of The Balancing Point.

Efficiency of Chinese Medical Training

And again, I'm… uh certified in functional medicine, as well as having a doctorate in traditional Chinese medicine. And I wanted to talk a little bit about efficiency and excellence. And so I've studied in China a couple of times, once in my master's program, once in my doctoral program. And uh what impressed me, particularly during my doctorate, was the incredible efficiency of the Chinese medical system, at least where I was studying. I was in major teaching hospitals uh in major cities. So, you know, of course it would be different if you're in a rural environment, just as it is if you were uh seeking healthcare in West Virginia here versus in New York City. But the absolute efficiency and effectiveness was mind blowing. I wish really strongly that every doctor Every insurance company executive should be forced to study in China, even just for a few weeks. Just a few weeks would make an incredible impression because of course we are indoctrinated in whatever system we're indoctrinated in and we're indoctrinated in the current medical system of the United States, which hasn't always been this way.

There was a time before medicine was corporatized. There was a time when they were actual. uh nonprofit hospitals often run by the Dominican sisters or a variety of religious organizations.

And people could actually be treated without cost at those locations. That doesn't really exist for us anymore, even though there's the, we see nonprofits where the presidents are making millions of dollars a year. So I want to talk a little bit about a couple of my experiences at teaching hospitals in China. One, I have a tremendous amount of experience treating diabetes, member of the American Diabetes Association, et cetera.

Diabetes Day in a Chinese Hospital

And I was invited in 2008 to be among the first cohort of practitioners from the United States that was invited to China because they had just changed, transformed their diabetes training. And the reason for that, well, when I was in China in the mid-90s, You have these eight to 10 lane streets and maybe one lane was traffic, cars at that time. And everything else were people walking in the streets or riding bicycles or motorbikes, et cetera. When I was back in 2008, say in Shanghai, you've got 10 lane streets going both ways. That's a total of 20 lanes. And all of them were packed with cars. So they'd given up their bicycle riding. They'd given up a lot of their walking. You walk down the street. And you'd see a Starbucks, you'd see a Kentucky Fried Chicken, uh you'd see a McDonald's. So their eating patterns had changed tremendously.

And so the lack of exercise, the adoption of our horrible fast food diet, diabetes had skyrocketed in China. And they said, look, we can't afford this. We got to come up with a better system. um And so they set up an entirely new

program. And one of the key features to that that I was privy to is every hospital, larger hospital, will have one day a month diabetes day. Interesting concept. Now I know from my uh many, many articles that I've read about diabetes care in the United States as a member of the American Diabetes Association, but that they very rarely use the term cure. They say control. In China, they say cure.

It's like, you have to get over this. We're not paying for this. uh And so you have just a totally different approach. The other thing that we know, again, from those same Western medical journals, is there is a direct correlation. The more often a diabetic patient, and this is true for many other conditions, but the more often a diabetic patient sees a healthcare worker the better their diabetes is controlled. And I've experienced that certainly in my practice.

Patients that drop in once a year and we're working on Hashimoto's thyroiditis or we're working on diabetes, they don't progress all that fast. They do progress, but not that fast.

If they come more often, they make very, very rapid progress. So in China, diabetes day, patient walks in. First thing that happens is they get a blood draw. Then they go and sit uh in an audience and they're exposed to several different lectures. The day I was there, they had an exercise physiology person who they, every month they get a new exercise to try out. This particular day, it was line dancing. And uh boy, you go to the parks in the mornings and retirement age is much, much younger in China. And you'll see huge core. cohorts of women doing line dancing out in the parks with their little portable music instruments.

That's the value of getting together is uh you're talking about your condition, you're seeing doctors, and you're creating cohort in every project, whether it's weight loss, blood sugar control. If you belong to a cohort, exercise in particular, you're much more likely to be successful. So they come in. m They watch an uh exercise physiologist talk to them about line dancing and demonstrate. They get up and try a little line dancing. And then someone comes in and talks about seasonal eating. And seasonal eating is a big part of Chinese dietary considerations. uh You eat the plants that are available in that season and magically that keeps you much healthier. Right? You drink, you eat green vegetables in the spring. That cleans you out. That's very detoxifying. Then as you go through the year, it changes. uh In fall, for example, you're eating a lot of red, orange, yellow vegetables and fruits, which have extremely high antioxidant content and will help keep you from catching colds and flus, et cetera. So seasonal eating, very important. The third thing that happens uh is that someone comes in, and my The that I was there, this woman had about 100 different slides and went through diabetes care and what causes diabetes in the first place. And it was fascinating. Every slide was about uh more Western medical ideas, science, et cetera, and or Chinese medicine. But the very last slide, she said, diabetes is a condition that starts in a young adulthood from eating foods that damage the adrenal system.

Gynecology Clinic and Fertility Care

And it was very fascinating that she ended with that. Okay, so now they've had three lectures and they've created cohorts. It's like, hey, let's go shopping together today, or hey, let's do line dancing in the park tomorrow. And so they're forming these groups. Then they go what's called go down the line. And so there are a row of doctors and other healthcare practitioners in a row.

So first they'll go up to a doctor that goes over their labs with them that they just had done, you know, a few hours ago, and they go through their labs and they look at their blood sugars and their liver enzymes, etc. Then they move down the row. They'll see uh someone who will do an eye exam on them right there, right there uh in the hall. and check out the condition of their eyes, looking for retinal problems. Then, so they'll have someone look at their feet to make sure they're not developing diabetic ulcers. Then the men go to an andrologist and the women talk to a gynecologist, see if they have any difficulties arising there from their blood sugars. Then they see an herbalist, then they will see an acupuncturist, and depending on the hospital, it could be any number of other specialists. That's a half day. of Diabetes Day in a Chinese hospital. And let me tell you, it's incredibly, incredibly effective. Now there's no good reason that could not be implemented in the United States. I almost tried myself, but you know, the work for me to get it together and round up medical doctors, et cetera, that would participate was a little daunting. But if a major hospital or a minor hospital for that matter wanted to do this, it wouldn't be that difficult. So talk to your doctors, talk to uh the staff and see if you can get a diabetes day. Then ah I was spending time in a gynecology clinic. My doctorate is in endocrinology with gynecology. So gynecological endocrinology.

So thyroid problems, adrenal problems, diabetes and gynecology and how the hormones play the role in that. I'm again, totally blown away. I'm there with my two guys, other two guys who were part of the cohort and we're sitting there and there's no privacy in China, right?

So that could be a downside. On the other hand, it could be an upside because all the people there, all the women there are sitting like on a big bench, a couch, and they're listening to everything that's going on with the woman that's being interviewed by the doctor. So they actually have a learning opportunity. And so there's a doctor, the main doctor who is uh certified in both Western medicine and in herbal medicine, which all of my teachers were. And so the patient comes in, sits down, doctor starts asking questions, takes her pulses, looks at her tongue just as we would do here. uh There are two interns working with her and she says, okay, take her in the back room. uh do a pelvic or vaginal swab and a pelvic exam. Patient comes out, they send her down to the lab carrying her swab. And they also give her an order for lab testing. So then more patients come through, you know, they keep them moving. About 45 minutes later, that patient comes back with her vaginal swab results and her lab test results. And the doctor says, oh, it looks like you have polycystic ovarian syndrome, but no STDs at this point. So I want you to go down and get an ultrasound. The intern writes an order for an ultrasound. The patient goes down, gets the ultrasound. 45 minutes later, she comes back, immediately moves to the head of the line. The doctor, I remember one case, said, oh. uh looks like one of your fallopian tubes is blocked. Have you had chlamydia?" And the patient said, oh yeah, I did. I did. had chlamydia. And the doctor says, well, the good news is uh the tube that's open is the one that you're going to ovulate into this month. And you've got some free fluid in there. I'm going to give you an herbal prescription to dry up the fluid. And she just amazingly comes up with about a 30 herb prescription that she dictates to one of the interns. and says, okay, and I want you to come in every two days and we're going to do an ultrasound to check on the size of the follicle, see when you're ready to ovulate, and then you'll come in, we'll give you an injection to speed up and help you ovulate, and there's about a 70 % chance you'll get pregnant this month. Now let me tell you, I've treated hundreds of fertility patients, and that process, from the time the patient first came in until We went through all the rounds of that, sending them out for a lab, sending them to a doctor to get tested. Then another appointment a month away or more to go over the labs. And then, oh, it looks like you might have polycystic ovarian syndrome.

Let's get you an ultrasound. That can be a month, a six week wait to get the ultrasound. Finally, finally you get the result. The patient has waited for months. The number one cause of unexplained infertility in my experience is stress. Now who do you think has more stress?

The patient that gets all of her needs taken care of in one morning or the patient that has to wait months and months to get through this process?

Personal Ultrasound Experience and Cost Comparison

And I'll tell you, it's the patient that has the least stress is the one that gets it handled in half a day. And by the way, those are walk-ins. These patients don't have appointments. If they show up in the morning, they're seen in the morning. If they show up in the afternoon, they're seen in the afternoon. It's that simple. Now I'll tell you my experience. I decided that I wanted to get some ultrasounds. So I went to a doctor there, just walked in, said I'd like to get some ultrasounds. So he wrote the order. I go down the hall. I had a 15 minute wait. ah I did nine ultrasounds. did, had everything checked and she found two huge kidney stones.

Okay. Two huge kidney stones. She dictated to an assistant. uh This was an MD, PhD with 20 years of experience. And she dictated it to me or to the person. They printed it out.

I walked away. This whole process took less than an hour. So I come back, I go to my doctor and I say, hey, I've got kidney stones. And she said, well, how do you know that? And I said, well, cause I got these ultrasounds in China. She says, we're not going to go by that.

We don't trust what they do in China. And I said, okay. Well, I'm peeing blood and I have extreme pain. She said, do you? And I said, that's what you're going to put in your records when you refer me to ultrasound. Six week wait, $800 for an ultrasound of one kidney. I got nine ultrasounds in China and I'm not part of their medical system.

Closing Remarks and Show Outro

I got nine ultrasounds for $27 with no weight. So. There is some efficiency and some things that we could definitely learn from the Chinese medical system. So anyway, thank you. This is Dr. John. Thanks for listening to me. Let me share my story with you. And I'll be back soon with another episode of The Balancing Point. Thank you for joining me on The Balancing Point. If you enjoyed today's episode, please follow the show, share it with a friend, and leave a review. Feeling out of balance? Most approaches just manage symptoms. Here we get to the root. So real healing, real clarity and balance can begin. Visit alamedaacupuncture.com. That's alamedaacupuncture.com to learn more, explore our supplements or book a call. We'd love to hear from you.