Whole Person Healing: Integrating Traditional and Complementary Modalities Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Background

Welcome to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. I'm Dr Amy Kruper-Smith, a doctor-prepared nurse practitioner. And this show is about empowering you to live a radiant, healthy, and balanced life.

Iím very excited to introduce today's guest, Diane Helm. Diane is a nurse-practitioner and the founder of Care First Medical, where she provides primary care and urgent care services.

She also offers functional medicine and complimentary services such as massage therapy, Reiki, and stem wave therapy. So welcome. Thank you so much for joining me today.

Well, thank you for having me. And so you and I met on a medical mission with International Medical Relief. It was the summer of 2024 and we went to Peru in the rainforest.

Yes, we did. So that was my first and only to the state mission and you were experienced. And so I kind of latched onto you to show me the ropes and to see what we needed to do.

Yeah. So it was so nice meeting you and I'm glad that I did. We're also getting ready to go to Guatemala here in a couple of months. I love doing the medical mission trips.

That's so exciting. How did you get involved with medical missions? What inspired you? So I got inspired to do medical missions because I feel like medical mission, it kind of brought me back to why I went into medicine and healthcare in the first place, like just providing care to the community without the overhead of businesses.

And you have to see the patients in five minutes and without insurance, you know, we can just sadly to go out of the country to do it, but go outta the county and just provide good old fashioned medical care to the people of different countries who are lacking so desperately medical.

Yeah, it's so rewarding. I didn't know what to expect when we did it. And just everyone was so grateful to have our time and our attention. It made me feel good to be given back.

Oh, definitely, it makes you feel so good. Especially they're so appreciative and they will literally, I mean, as you saw, people will wait there hours all day long and not complain.

Just there to get good old fashioned medical care. It is very rewarding. So, so, rewarding! Now, do you have a favorite story from your medical missions?

A favorite experience that just always stands out? Um, I think probably my favorite experience is when I is my very first medical mission when i went to Guatemala and I remember being so impressed.

Medical Mission Trips and Peru Experience

with when we arrived in the village at our location, there were about 50 residents who, some of them had walked for hours to get there. And they were all just sitting there while we were setting up.

and they literally sat there for ours. They were just so appreciative and so happy. That always stuck with me because sometimes people aren't that patient.

you know, especially when they go to the doctor and if there's a wait time. I mean, I know I don't wanna wait, you

now, as soon as I get in there I'm ready to see and I wanna to wait five minutes.

So, but they're, they just, that's their day. They're there to get medical care. And I think that was what impressed me the most is, there was no rushing, There's no complaining.

Everybody's just happy to be seen. It's very nice. And what kind of patients did you see, what kinds of things did, did did treat? We saw a lot of upper respiratory, a, lot, of pain, chronic headaches, back pain knee pain orthopedic pain.

A lot. Of the women in Guatemala, as I'm sure in other countries, they make their own. clothes and they make their own things to sell or trade so they um they're all very arthritic in their hands and um and one other thing that I remember is um we have a reading glasses station and I Remember those those ladies with those arthridic hands going to the reading classes and They put those reading glass on they like oh like like they can see their fingers like for the first time they Can see And I mean, they never knew they couldn't see.

And, you know, so that that always that sticks with me. Reading glasses is I don't think about reading glasses, but when you can't say it, suddenly you have.

I remember people wanting to take them home to their husbands because most of what we saw is women because the husbands were working so they could come.

And all the ladies want to take reading glasses home, you know to their husbands and we're like no they have to make sure they're the right prescription, but they were like oh my gosh my husband needs to see.

So, so I think just the patients that they And then seeing those ladies with those arthritic hands that make their own clothes, and they just don't let it stop them.

And the reading glasses seem to look on someone's face when they can actually see after 20 years of not being able to see. Something so simple that can be life-changing for them?

So simple. But something that we take for granted, because if we need reading glass, we go to Walmart and we just buy a pair of reading classes. They can't do that there.

Yeah, very simple stuff. And I think that's one thing I like about Mission Trips, too, is they don't take anything for granted. You know, I mean, they're happy to get a tile at all, like when we give them like a week's worth of tile and all they are so appreciative.

Absolutely. One thing that stuck with me, you actually taught me to do a shoulder injection in Peru. And we had a lot of farmers and manual laborers. So giving somebody something that maybe would give them six months of pain relief, I thought that was so valuable and I was grateful to be able to to that.

Yes. Yes, it's amazing. And then I think that's, you know, one of the things that they need most, especially the men, because they're out there, they are doing very manual labor.

They're not sitting behind desks in other countries working on a computer. I mean, their out their working, physically, manually working. So they do have a lot of musculoskeletal issues.

The shoulder injection is life changing. Yes. So, so cool. When we met, you were getting ready to open your clinic. What was the inspiration behind that?

I think really the same inspiration for the medical missions. I have been in large healthcare systems my whole career. And there's that huge overhead, you're limited as to what you can do.

You're limit as how much time you spend with the patients. They want you in and out in five minutes. And I think that really limits the care that we're able to give to patients, so my inspiration for starting my own business is I really

wanted to treat patients the way that I wanted them to be treated.

anybody telling me how long I could spend with the patients, I didn't want anybody to tell me, how I can treat the patient. I wanted to be able to give them the care that they deserved and take as much time as I needed.

And that really was why I want to start my own business, because I felt very restricted and limited as to what I do. Yeah, and it's unfortunate that, you know, the medicine has become such a financial thing in so many, especially people in primary care, you know, there's so much pressure to just see more, see with less time.

And that affects our quality. It does. I hear from so many people, they say, oh, I tried to get in with my primary care, but I couldn't because they were full.

If your primary is full and you're sick and can't get with your primaries, that's who you should be able to be with. That's why we're urgent care. We're here when people can get So your urgent care, so things that can't wait, people who have illnesses, but you have a little bit of a twist.

So you do things a bit different with some functional medicine. And so what kinds of things are you treating at your clinic? So in our clinic, we have primary care, urgent care and functional medicine.

And primary and urgent is one business that's care first medical and then functional Madison is care for us functional wellness.

Opening Care First Medical

So it's a completely separate business, completely separated from the other clinic. Wow. I think that so fascinating. Are you able to combine the two modalities, even though the businesses are separate?

I do. It's hard for my pr they do kind of get the b medicine, not not in the they do get my expertise as far as I want you eating this diet, I wanna you taking these supplements.

We don't do a lot of the fancy testing, but we do do some advanced testing. we a do lot advanced cardiac markers on like my primary care patients and things that insurance is not gonna pay for but that I think it's important in order to treat primary.

So there is a little bit of overlap. So how do you feel, I think you mentioned, you know, with access, do feel that your clinic is kind of filling that gap for people that can't access traditional medicine.

Do you that some of the other services you offer are also kind decreasing the gap in traditional care? I do. I feel like functional medicine fills a gap.

Yeah. because a lot of what functional medicine is, is not traditional medicine. And unfortunately, insurance doesn't pay for it. So I don't know that it fills a gap in modern medicine, but I think it definitely fills in gap healthcare as a whole, because, a lotta times, people's symptoms are not something that you go to the doctor and you get lab work and they say, oh, this is out of whack.

That's why you have so much fatigue or, you know, This is what's going on. This Is why You can't lose weight. So, um, You know I, I think definitely it fills a gap in, in healthcare and how people feel.

You Know, a lot of times we, we deal a Lot with hormones. We deal A lot with gut health. And, and, And you Know a lotta times in modern medicine, they may do a blood test, check like estrogen levels.

And then they'll start people on bio identical hormones, but, um, you know, how much do we really need? Um, we do a much better job of, of really looking, at the hormones at cortisol levels and at putting, everything together as a whole.

When it comes to the hormones, it's like you have your sex hormones. You have you're a thyroid and you your adrenal gland. I always explain it like it is three golf balls on a server's tray and once One ball starts rolling.

The other two balls are going to roll along with it. You know, you can't have one ball rolling without the other 2. So hormones are very linked to each other.

When your thyroid is off, chances are your sex hormones or your adrenals are off. Your adranals, your thyroids, or sex, hormones might be. They all work together.

And unfortunately, in modern medicine, they don't check them all together, They check one and they treat one. We're gonna pause for a break from our sponsor.

You're listening to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. Don't go anywhere, we'll be right back. Welcome back to energized and revitalized with Doctor Amy, I'm Dr Amy Cooper-Smith and my guest today is Diane Helm.

Functional Medicine and Hormone Balance

I think people know the word cortisol and they know it's a stress hormone, but let's talk about what it is, how you check it and then what you do to fix it.

Sure. So cortisol, like you said, it's a stress hormone, you know, comes from the adrenal glands. And when we check it, I like to do urine tests. When we do the urine test, we checked it every few hours.

Then when get the report, We can look at the cortisol trend. so when you wake up in the morning, your cortisol level should go up. Now when go to bed at night, Your cortisol levels should down.

And unfortunately, what we see sometimes, especially people with chronic fatigue is when they wake up, their cortisol level is low and it's low all day long.

That's why they have no energy. They're fatigued all the day. And then we have people who have a hard time sleeping at night. Um, and sometimes that's because their court is all level bumps up right before they're going to bed at nine when it should be low.

So instead of being low at night and elevated like it should be during the day, sometimes it's up at and low during day or sometimes is just low. So what causes that?

So cortisol is triggered by chronic stress and inflammation usually. Usually what we'll see is cortisol levels will be very high and they'll stay high for a while until the body can't compensate anymore and then they drop.

So when we see chronically low cortisol levels, we know at one time they were elevated and the person was very stressed out for it to be as low as it is.

So it usually goes up and then it stays up until the body just can't compensate anymore and it crashes. Let's say you find someone who has that low cortisone.

What do you do then? So usually we treat low, well, first we always like to find out why, that's the big thing in functional medicine is why is the cortisol low?

But we do treat cortisol usually with different adaptogens like rhodiola, ashwagandha, reishi mushrooms, those are very stimulating. So that how we treated low cortisol levels, we give adaptogen to help bring them up.

So now if somebody, let's say they don't have the testing and they say, oh, I heard Ashram Daga is good for you. Will it cause any harm if someone's cortisol is normal and then you take that?

You know, all of the adaptogens can have unwanted side effects. So yeah, if you don t need it, then I wouldn't take

it. I wouldn't take it. I think that's true with anything, because even good things can have side effects.

And I know you've probably seen this as well. But I've had people come into my clinic with a bag full of vitamins. Those are all good, but maybe not all necessary for you.

Right. Sometimes you can't have too much of a good thing. and they can interact with each other and, or counteract each. They can especially like vitamin B6, like you can, you could be vitamin D6 toxic.

And I've heard from so many people that say, um, Oh, I was told I can take all my vitamins and what my body doesn't use. I'll just pee out. Yeah. That's true to a certain degree, but I mean, there is such a thing as vitamin detoxes.

You can get toxic on anything. Right, so more is not necessarily better. That's why they need someone like you to kind of help guide the process. Yes.

So you mentioned chronic fatigue. Are you seeing a lot of that? Oh yes, yes. Yeah. Probably most people that I do see suffer from chronic fatig. And what do you think is causing that.

Sometimes it's thyroid. Progesterone levels are low, sometimes, you know, the cortisol level is low. When someone complains of chronic fatigue, if they are in functional medicine, cortisol is the first thing I checked.

If they're not in function medicine. Unfortunately, a serum cortisol levels is not always accurate, because, that's a moment in time. And, like I said, we check cortisol kind of all day long to do a trend.

So when you just do one-time cortisol level, it may not be accurate. And the same thing for those 24-hour urine cortisol levels. You know, that's a collection of your urine for 24 hours.

But that may be perfectly normal, but it also may perfectly be normal if your cortisol is low during the day and elevated at night, like it should not you know, in 24 hours, it may look normal.

And when you mix it all up in a red jar, your cortisol might be normal, right? Right. So even though it's not the most convenient thing to have to collect four different samples, really, is just one day.

It's worth it to see what's going on. Right, It is definitely worth that. Yeah. Are you seeing, I know it is all linked together, but problems with sleep?

Yes, we do see a lot of problems People can't fall asleep, they can stay asleep or they're waking up at three o'clock in the morning. And a lot of times when we, you know, check their cortisol levels, their cortisone is spiking at night.

If it's not sometimes at, night, we say one to three a.m. or the liver hours, sometimes people are struggling to detoxify. And their liver is kind of screaming out in the middle of the night, which wakes them up.

Also, we have parasites that are more active at night. And sometimes that will wake people up because they'll wake up to go to the bathroom. or so they think, but really, you know, they may have like an itchy anus.

Cortisol, Fatigue, and Sleep Issues

And that's sometimes what wakes people up at night, and then they go to the bathroom, then go back to bed at nigh, t and they kind of notice that itch, that they don't really think much about it, until you really ask them, when you wake up to go the to bathroom at three o'clock in the morning, is your anuse itching?

And then you're like, oh my gosh, it is. So that could be parasites or your liver. So you mentioned liver as a cause of sleep deprivation, and that's something that is really interesting.

So if somebody, a lot of my clients, will wake up between one and three, can't get back to sleep, A lot them also

drink alcohol. Do you think that the cause is maybe the liver struggling a little bit?

I mean, I don't know if the alcohol itself is a reason, but it definitely could contribute to it. It could be just that the liver is struggling to detoxify.

And of course, we know alcohol, you know, affects the livers. So that certainly could cause the lower issues with detoxifying. that and everything else.

I have all the chemicals that we're ingesting all day long, the plastics that our food are in, you know, all of that. So basically everything kind of gets detoxified in the liver.

And if you don't do a liver detox or sweat or, um, do different things to help detoxify, it can get clumped up in there. We got to detox it by every now and then.

What do you like to do for liver? Detox. So liver detox, I think any good detox. Lots of water and sweating is a good way to detox by going to a sauna, walking after we eat, just helps everything, keep everything moving.

And once everything's moving, it should be detoxifying. Is there like a minimal amount of time to spend in the sauna for it to be effective? Um, I don't know.

Um. I wouldn't do more than, you know, like 10 minutes at a time or what they recommend. Yeah. Like I want to go in and spend extra time trying to detoxify.

It probably depends on the temperature too. And I've been in somewhere like I couldn't possibly stay in for more the 10 Minutes and then if it's more mild, maybe.

In most places, have like a set protocol that they use. Yes. So it probably depends on the type of device too, I would think. So you do some other really neat alternative things like Reiki.

Yeah. How do you explain Reikki to or why would you use Reike for somebody? So Reki is fabulous. In the body along the spine, there's seven chakras and these are energy centers.

in the body. And when we get sick, when our detoxification pathways are clogged, we're stressed, those energy pathways can get blocked. So Reiki uses energy.

I use my hands over the client and my energy interacts with their energy and what we want to do is kind of open up all those pathways of those chakras and You know, unclog or rebalance the energy pathways so that people, you know they feel better.

It's good for emotional health. Good for physical health is good. For spiritual health, is this good? For feeling better is, good, for stress. So it's an alternative treatment, but it really is.

I think it's so neat that you do that because you can offer people your medical expertise and your training, but you could also say, you know, we can try this different way and see what works best for you.

And most people are open to that. Yeah. So you dry needling as well. What's involved with that process? So dry needling, we use basically an acupuncture needle.

It's a solid thin needle and we find trigger points. So usually anytime someone has muscle tightness, back pain, hip pain any kind of musculoskeletal pain.

We look for a trigger point, which is a very, very tight muscle where the muscle bands are very tall. And we take the needle, and put it directly into that muscle band.

and it helps break it up to help it relax. So once we do it, sometimes we'll get like a spasm and that lets us know

that it's working. And then after a dry needling, we want people to drink lots and lots of water because what holds those muscles really tight a lot of times is those toxins in the muscle.

Once we put the needle in muscle, We want to people drink lot and lot water to flush those toxin out of the muscles, out the body through the urinary system And then by releasing all those toxins will help keep those muscles nice and relaxed.

Because if you don't drink a lot of water and release the toxins, then sometimes those muscle will just tighten back up again. So I think that's a common theme in our conversation is toxins.

What's going on? Why are we so exposed to toxins? We are exposed to so many toxins just in our day to day life in the foods that we eat.

Reiki, Dry Needling, and Detox Support

You know, unless we're eating completely organic foods, you know we are expose to pesticides. We're exposed to plastics and all of the things that our foods come in when we put plastic in the microwave that forms, you know, different toxins that we don't want in our system.

Even touching receipts, um, when you go to Walmart and you get the receipt, all those things expose us to toxins. The air that breathe exposes us toxins, our body is constantly being exposed toxins So what do you say to people or what you encourage them to do to decrease that exposure, since it's everywhere.

It is everywhere, you know, trying not to drink from plastic water bottles using glass don't leave your water bottle in the car in Don't heat your food up in the microwave.

If it's in a plastic container, put it in glass first. You know, just simple things. When you go to the grocery store, if it says, do you want us a printed receipt or do I ask to email you a receipt?

You want to e-mail the receipt so you don't have to touch it? Just simple, things like that. Just trying to avoid those toxic foods and things that we're exposed to on a daily basis.

Now do you, I saw on your website, you do a little bit of a foot detox. So how does that work? So it's an ionic foot detox. What it does is we put an Ionizer in the water and it positively charges the hydrogen ions in water.

And it acts like a magnet. You put your feet, bare feet in a water, and acts a like magnet and kind of pulls the dead you know, the dead debris and toxins out kind of through your pores with that positive ionizer.

So putting a big magnet at your feet and pulling everything from it. And people love it, we have people that say, it's great for their eczema, just makes them make some just overall feel good.

Good. It's so exciting. You have so many things that you do that just help people feel better like the like themselves maybe. you know, if they've lost that, that's a really cool position that you're in.

Yeah. And that what I wanted when I opened my clinic is I didn't just want to be able to prescribe someone a pill. I want it to give them the option of the functional medicine if, they so chose.

If they didn t choose functional medicines, I'm wanting to get them other options, you for like their musculoskeletal pain instead of, steroids or pain relievers you know, dry needling, you don't have to take any medicine for that, and it's a much more natural way to treat your muscle pain.

And reiki, for stress and for people who are chronically ill all the time, a lot of times those You know those chakra pathways can get locked up. So, you know, I just, i think it's important to be able to give people I mean some people just want to take a pill for everything, but other people don't want We also do meditations once a week.

Every Wednesday night we do a meditation to relieve that chronic stress because a lot of people tell me that they want to meditate but they don't know how.

They try to meditate and they close their eyes and two minutes later they're thinking about what they are cooking for dinner. So this is a way for everybody to sit down and meditate together.

You don't have to be perfect at it. Close your eyes, go into a trance, just kind of relaxing and getting outside of all that stress. If you do it every week, then it really does make a difference.

Absolutely. I think just for such a stressed out society and that stress does, you know, kind of affect every aspect of our lives. Glad you're doing that.

Between the stress and the toxins. Right. But you've got lots for that, so we're just about out of time, but I really want to thank you for joining me today on the show.

And so how can people get in touch with you if they want So we have two websites.

Clinic Services and Closing Remarks

So it's www.carefirstmedical.com and www dot carefirstfunctionalwellness. com. Or they can reach us at 276-601-2249 is our phone number. But we don't have a website.

We have Facebook, so we're out there on social media. Wonderful. And I see you post a lot and you're really sharing your knowledge. So people should check you out just to kind of learn a little bit more.

They should definitely check out our Facebook page. I tell you, my nurse, and my receptionists are absolutely awesome. and they're the ones that keep all of our social media going. I would not even be here without them.

Fabulous. All right, Diane. Thank you so much again and good luck on your trip. But I'm sure we'll see each other soon. Well, thank you Dr. Amy. Thank you for having me.

Thanks to our listeners for tuning in to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. I am excited to announce our 30-day wellness challenge, sponsored by Amethyst Wellness and this podcast.

Each day, participants will be given a simple task that is supported by one of our podcast episodes. To learn more and sign up, please visit amethyswellness.com slash wellnesschallenge or send an email to radiantpodcast2025 at gmail.

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Until then, stay healthy and here's to your best life.