Your Guide To Integrative MS Management Transcript

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Introduction and Megan Weigelu2019s Background

Thank you for joining us for another wonderful interview with the MS and Neuroimmune Summit. I'm here with my good friend and colleague, Megan Weigel.

She is a has a doctor of nursing practice. She's advanced practice, nurse practitioner, and she has a, special interest, in training in holistic medicine.

And she has a multiple sclerosis practice. And if you look over her shoulder, it looks like she has a surfboard on the wall. So I think she's also a surfer.

So, Megan, welcome. Did I miss anything? in the bio that I should cover? Oh, I don't think so. I think anything else we can cover while we're talking?

Okay, so, let's talk about your, training as a, doctor of nurse practice. What does that mean? Sure. So I, I'm a nurse practitioner, and when I graduated with my master's degree as a nurse practitioner in 2000, and, I, I knew that I would want to advance my education.

And at some point, the powers that be in the ivory towers of nursing decided that, nurse practitioners needed more of a clinical doctorate than a PhD.

And so the opportunity to get a PhD was there. But for people who were in the trenches, they created the Doctor of Nursing practice, which, allowed us to, really dive deep into research, but also into, the, the business side of medicine and the administrative side of medicine and then have additional clinical time.

And so through the DNP, which I did from 2006 to 2009, I was able to really have formal neuroscience education, which I didn't get in my family nurse practitioner program.

So coming out as a family nurse practitioner, I went right into neurology and was sort of trained almost as an apprentice, like in, you know, in the old time. So, yeah.

Now, what I really like to do is to give people a lot of hope right away.

Lifestyle Changes and Diet in MS Wellness

So I'm going to put you on the spot and ask, do you have any really great success stories from people who've used an integrative, approach as part of their wellness program that you can share?

Yeah, I'm I'm covered in goosebumps right now because I can tell you that the best success stories I've had are from people who have really embraced, major lifestyle changes, with their diagnosis of M. S.

and have had within a year of their diagnosis, say MS is the best thing ever happened to me. Okay. So this is pretty exciting. can you share a little more detail about what some of their lifestyle changes were that they embraced?

Yeah. So for these specific people, there was, a lot of stress in their lives, whether it was coming from work or from family or from relationships, that tremendous amount of stress, little sleep, little self-care, in the form of, exercise or prayer, meditation, mindfulness, self-reflection, a lot of hurry and a lot of worry.

and really not great nutrition. and I think the easiest thing to do, it's, it's it's hard to look inward first, especially when you feel bad. And one of the easiest things to do is to make a simple change in your diet.

So, for these folks, it was taking out processed foods. It was adding in, you know, initiating more of a plant based diet. So similar to your level one of your walls protocol.

and many of these people did just that. They implemented that level one of the protocol. and, and some of them were living, what I would call very, you know, traditionally clean eating, but what that meant was kind of, low fat foods without much variety.

Yeah. and, and perhaps, you know, not all the colors of the rainbow of vegetables and things like that. So with some of those changes, then their physical health started to feel better.

And when your their physical health felt better, they were able to work on their emotional health. and then the stress started to reduce. They started to look at things that, they may be doing that weren't necessary, weren't altogether meaningful to them, but they felt like they had to do, and make some changes in their life.

And lo and behold, in spite of the diagnosis of M. S., their daily life became a much happier and more manageable deal to live with. Yeah. and they were able to make good choices for their, for their bodies.

So again, everyone who's listening, we're talking about reducing the sugar, eating more of these radical things. Are grandmothers new should eat called vegetables.

Reducing sugar and also alcohol. So let's talk about alcohol a little bit more because yeah, I don't think we're as knowledge because no one else so far as mentioned, the alcohol issue.

So I'll just say that, you know, I'm not going to tell you that I don't drink alcohol. Right? So I like to have a glass of wine. but there's a lot of sugar in many forms of alcohol.

Not all of them. And I think that, particularly with Covid and isolation, at least I've seen in my practice the use of alcohol really skyrocket as self-medication for things.

and it affects your sleep, it affects your cognition, it affects your energy level. It affects the way your body's able to operate. It affects the way your liver's able to process toxins.

And, and I think that, many people use it as a form of, well, I don't, you know, a form of help getting to sleep, but it totally ruins your sleep architecture.

So, that's a that's a big thing. I think that folks need to take a look at with, implementing a healthier diet. and we just had a report here in Iowa that, increased alcohol consumption.

Iowa, apparently is now leading the nation. in this increases our risk for, cancer, in addition to all those other, terrible things. so what would be a healthy or an okay use of alcohol?

So I think you stick with the, moderate use of alcohol for a man or a woman, which is one serving for a woman, two servings for a man. I don't know why.

That's, What does a serving. So let's just be very precise. What does it serve? I wish, can I go get something real quick? Because I think it would be helpful.

So why don't you go, get something and I'll chat a little bit more, so don't be gone, okay? I'll be right back. I think it'll be a useful visual.

Alcohol, Sleep, and Sleep Hygiene

and so while we're waiting for, Megan to come back, let me, re, remind everyone a, level one Wahls diet is nine cups of fruits and vegetables, three cups of green leafy vegetables, three cups of deeply colored, vegetables and berries, and three cups of sulfur rich cabbage, onion, mushroom family.

And I see we have Megan back with her visual. So, Megan, you have the floor again. This is your grandmother's wine glass. Okay. That's beautiful. Well, that has changed.

This is what you buy. This is what you buy at the store. So when I ask a person, how many glasses of, well, I drink, I drink three glasses of wine at night.

what size glass are you using? Because if you're using this one, you're drinking, over a liter of wine per night. Most likely. You probably fit 16oz in here if you use this one with about eight ounces in here.

And a serving of wine is, I think is 4 to 6oz. 4 to 6oz. So even though still. Yeah, just. Yeah, yeah. Just think about that. And, and, everyone four ounces is a quarter cup.

eight. No, eight ounces is a cup. Four ounces would be a half cup. Yeah. Yeah. so when. We're talking about. yeah. And when we're talking. beer. Go ahead.

I think there is a, like a 16 ounce, 12 or 16 ounce can of beer. I'd have to look it up to be certain. I know that alcohol is a shot, which is an ounce, so an ounce isn't even, you know, a shot. Glasses.

I think two ounces. so that would be like a tablespoon of, regular just about. Yeah. Yeah. So. So we tend to upsell our alcohol, our alcohol intake. it's like supersize me, right?

We do the same thing with alcohol. Yeah. and so a, a safe amount for, for me would be 4 to 6oz of wine, in, every day. Yeah. So if you're, if you're using wine medicinally and predominantly red wine because, it just it has less sugar than white wine and there are more of the, the phytonutrients in it, if you're using it medicinally.

So for things like, well, maybe cardiac health or something like that, than it is one serving a day for a man or for a woman and two servings a day for a man.

again, I don't I am not certain as to why there's a difference, because some women weigh the same as men. And, you know, those kinds of things. And I'm not sure about liver metabolism, but, if you're not drinking alcohol, there's no reason to start.

No reason to start. You know, I have people ask me that. Should I start drinking for heart health? No. Just eat more colorful vegetables. everyone who's listening, I want you to know that I was enjoying, wine, with my meals in the evening.

And then I realized when I got my ordering that the days I had wine, my sleep was terrible. And so I, quit drinking wine. I quit drinking alcohol. I will very rarely have alcohol.

and so I'm going to I'm going to ask you, how for those who do still have alcohol, how much time should you have between your consumption of alcohol and going to bed?

That's a good question. I definitely recognize particularly, and I'm sure that there are many women my age. I'm in my late 40s. I'm perimenopausal. I definitely recognize the effects of alcohol on my heart rate and my sleep at night.

which is why I've also tremendously cut back to basically nothing. you know, I think you'd have to sort of decide what's best for you. I mean, I would, I would say like at least three hours before bedtime.

Watch your heart rate. I don't wear, I don't wear, a smartwatch or anything like that, but many people do, and I think it's pretty obvious what you can see.

You know, the heart rate, it increases after you drink caffeine or drink alcohol. or like you said, watch your sleep. Architecture. and and it's pretty motivating.

Good sleep is so motivating. Why don't we talk about sleep? and you think the role of sleep in your patients and what you do to help them sleep? Sure.

I think sleep is one of the hardest things to talk to patients about. I think it's one of the hardest things to correct. I think it's one of the easiest things to get stuck in a behavioral cycle.

and what I mean by that is let's just say last night, I didn't sleep. Well, it's 4:00 here where I am. If I didn't sleep well last night, I'm already worrying about whether or not I'm going to sleep well the night.

It only takes a night to get people messed up in their brains about sleep. the American Academy or American College of Sleep medicine or whatever the medicine governing body of sleep is, changed their guidelines for the management of insomnia a couple of years ago to say that the gold standard for for management of insomnia is cognitive behavioral therapy.

there are very few therapists that. Let's, tell people what cognitive behavioral therapy is. Was it a behavioral therapy? Yeah. So it's a type of therapy that you do with a counselor or a psychologist who's trained specifically in CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy.

and it uses, tools, behavioral management, to help, to help you get through a problem that you have. So, let's say, for example, that it's insomnia. Well, what happens what are you doing up until the moment that you go to sleep?

Let's change that routine. Let's change that thought process. If you go to go to bed just fine, and then you wake up in the middle of the night, then what's happening?

Let's change that thought process. So it's, it's almost like giving you little stepping stones to make it across the bridge to get to sleep. I use the bridge analogy because I've had so many patients over the years have fear of of driving over bridges, and cognitive behavioral therapy is very helpful for that.

So I use that analogy, like to get to the bridge of, of sleep. the issue, the issue with it is that, it's hard to see a therapist these days, and not many of them are trained in sleep medicine.

Yeah. And so I tend to focus on sleep hygiene, like, what are we eating and drinking before bed? the bedroom is for is for sleep and sex. It's not for TV, it's not for checking Facebook for an hour before you go to bed.

you know, it's it's not for watching scary movies and reading scary books. I talk about temperature. I talk about comfort. Or what's the right temperature. Yeah.

Well, so with Ms.. Right. Most people want to be cool. so I've had many patients, recommend using, like, the cooling, getting a cooling mattress or cooling sheets, which they make now, making sure that there's a fan on or that the temperature is a little bit lower at night.

And those are for people who struggle with that. I think the best temperature for sleep is somewhere between 68 and 72 degrees, but I think many people would argue with me about a personal preference.

and then you could be too cold as well. and then I also talk to patients a lot about, about mindfulness, picking a mindfulness practice that becomes a routine.

maybe it's a mantra. Maybe it's a type of breathing. maybe it's even using, songs that are relaxing or, rhythms that are relaxing, that you can. I hate to have people use their devices while they're trying to fall asleep, but sometimes you need those for, how do you use sleep?

So if you were, say, going to listen to, sleep music or, a meditation, then I would recommend that you just, you know, put the device on speaker, rather than have headphones in.

Yeah, yeah. just because it's easier to just fall asleep.

Integrating Disease-Modifying Therapy with Holistic Care

And I believe that you can, set the device, like, on a timer. so it just burns off after a period of time. excellent, excellent. and so, some, patients have been prescribed benzodiazepines to help them sleep.

what, what are your thoughts about that? I don't really feel, I don't have lovely opinions about most sleep medicines. I think the the newer class, the Dora's, the dual orexin receptor antagonists, I think, they seem to have, rather than putting you to sleep, they decrease your wake mechanism.

So, things like, Ambien put you to sleep. They're hypnotics, these newer medicines. and I can name them if you want. I'm not sure. Is that is that okay if I name them?

Yeah, you can if you want to. Because people may have may have, had some of these prescribed. Q Vivek. Bel Samara. Oh, gosh, I forget the third, but it'll come to me.

They decrease your wake drive instead of turning up your sleep drive, but they are associated with the same sorts of of side effects. You need to have a certain amount of time to be asleep.

There could be odd sleep related behaviors. I don't it like. Sounds like you're still, have the point of view that the cognitive behavioral therapy and sleep hygiene is a superior way to go.

It's superior. However, and this is what I say about antidepressants as well. you know, God gave us medicine, and, this is my personal belief. And there's medicine for a reason.

There are people who can't get to cognitive behavioral therapy for sleep. They can't use it until they start sleeping for a little bit of time. So I think that the medicines, you know, the medicines should be a temporary fix and that the, the work that you put in should be the long term fix.

but I think that we all sometimes need some symptom management to be able to accept the fact that we have to do some work. Yeah, of course, of course.

Yeah. Well, again, thank you so much for joining us today. Yeah. Thanks for having me. I hope you found a conversation. Insightful, engaging. Now, if you're a summit purchaser, stay right here, because we're going to dive even deeper into this wonderful conversation.

And if not, click on the button below or to the side and get access to a world of information. Get ready to reclaim your health. Now, if you're watching this, thank you for being a valuable member of our community.

Let's dive right in. So, let's talk about disease modifying treatments. Sure. can you put that in context? Because we've been talking about, an integrative, holistic, approach.

How does it fit in with the disease modifying treatments? Yeah, absolutely. I think it's, I think that they complement each other very well. so I like to use analogies because I, I don't know, I think they work well. So, if you have a house that's on fire, you're the house.

You living with them, as are the house that's on fire. If you have a house that's on fire and you have the fire truck, they're pouring water on the fire to put it out.

And the fire truck pouring water on the fire is is the disease modifying therapy. And you keep throwing up gasoline into the fire. That's the unhealthy lifestyle.

Do you think the fire trucks going to help you very much. So the answer is the fire truck doesn't really have a chance to help if someone's in the house just spewing gasoline everywhere onto the fire.

But if you know you have the person, you know that your body is the house on fire if you have. And I'll take it just

back to the person. At this point, if you have a person who is, you know, doing the best they can within the within the, the things that they have to deal with on a daily basis to eat healthier foods, to reduce their stress level, to move their body, whatever that looks like for them to get good, good sleep, to, you know, stay active within a social environment, to give love, to feel love.

Then that fire hose has a better chance at putting out the fire, because all these other things that we're exposed to on a daily basis that cause, our immune system to run amuck, have a better chance at calming down when we're giving our body a better environment.

So you have somebody, coming in active disease, lots of several relapses, several lesions on your head. you started them on a highly effective DMT, and they have embraced your idea of, addressing health behaviors.

How quickly might they begin to notice that they feel differently? I would say that I would say it's an individual. Definitely an individual answer. I think there's the placebo effect, even with lifestyle medicine.

because when you start to do things and let's say it's hard, right, it's hard to make healthy lifestyle changes, but you've done it. You start to feel empowered.

Energy Medicine and Mind-Body Practices

and then that just makes you feel better. Just feeling empowered makes a person feel better. So anywhere from two weeks to six months, you know, some people are shorter on hope and empowerment than other people.

Some people are less resilient than other people, and they just require a little bit more cheerleading. you know, keep on going and you'll get there. and no, no one ends up perfect.

not me, not you. You know, no one ends up perfect. And so there is some level of acceptance with the disease process that I think we also have to talk about.

and then also, okay, well, if you're doing x, y and Z and you're not get you're not meeting your goals, what else do we need to look at? Are there other things that we need to look at?

Are there other things in the way. how about other medical conditions? How about, the environment that you're living in? How about your relationships?

and, you know, kind of getting underneath the, the very obvious that might be right in front of your face to, what else might be holding? You're holding you back from living to your fullest potential.

Even with a diagnosis like multiple sclerosis, I think that's where, the importance of letting a person tell their story, comes in, because many people don't feel like they've ever been fully listened to.

you know, their whole their whole story, you know, not just what happened in the year before you had Ms.. But how was your upbringing? Why are you the way you are, and what's holding you back for being the way you want to be?

even if you, you know, still have, a challenge with walking at the end of the day. So we talked, about diet, stress, exercise. you'd mentioned that you also do some work with energy medicine.

you can. Yeah. A little bit about. Well, what is energy medicine. Yeah, yeah. So it kind of gets to this. What else is in the way? energy medicine. I'll just name the types of energy medicine that people might be aware of.

So I would say that breathwork is a form of energy medicine, meditation and mindfulness can be a form of energy medicine, even massage can be a form of energy medicine.

And then some of the I would say I call them woo woo. The more woo woo, things are things like Reiki, therapeutic

touch, healing touch. sound healing, yoga therapy, acupressure, acupuncture.

what happens with these? What happens with these? So. I think for our listeners are like, I have no idea what's really going on in this. Or else they're going, yeah, yeah.

so, and I'll, I'll add biofeedback to this too, because many people are familiar with biofeedback, which is, using, message that your, your own body gives, to help you make a change to reduce stress, or improve well-being.

Usually it's heart rate. so as we have become more aware of, the human body, and physics, we start to understand, how the human body is related to quantum physics and how, our energy as a human body, is actually like, related to the person next to me, my neighbor.

You and I sitting here together, like, on zoom. We're both. We're actually really, energy back and forth. We're in sync. Yeah, we're in sync right now because we are both passionate about this subject.

And, you know, we're in tune. and that's not that's something that can be actually measured. Like if we sat here and we were the a little heart math biofeedback thing, our heart rate as we talk would our heart rate variability would start to entrain.

And that's scientifically measure. So it's actually not new. It's thousands of years old. It dates back to the original science of acupuncture, the original science of Vedic medicine, back 5000, 3 to 5000 years ago, if not longer. And, what what those, brilliant people with little to no technology discovered is that our our energy runs along lines, that runs along chakras.

And, when we get sick, it's because our energy is blocked in one of these meridians or one of these chakras. They're associated with organ systems, but not organ systems, as you and I know them, conventionally.

so when we talk about the Liver meridian and Chinese medicine, or the, the wood meridian, and the liver as an organ. We're not talking about you having liver disease.

We're talking about the emotions that are associated with the liver meridian and and actually, things are related. So, you know, the. Just think of the liver.

I'll go back to alcohol for a second. And alcoholism, there tends to be a lot of anger. Anger is associated with the liver. So if you can move energy through these meridians and get get things flowing again, then the disease associated with with that meridian or with that chakra, is helped to move along.

There's also something called epigenetics. epigenetics is what's in our DNA from the emotions of and experiences of our ancestors. It's why, you know, a, a child who's born to a mother who was abused but is adopted into a beautiful family may still have issues related to the mother's personality, or even a surrogate, you know, that sort of thing.

and so energy technique can help, with just some of these things that won't go away. So that person who says I'm doing all the right things, I'm. I'm up to level three on the walls protocol.

I'm doing my, my, my exercise every day. I'm getting good sleep. I feel like I'm doing better with my relationships and managing my stress, but I just can't get past X.

That's when I would say, why don't we try some acupuncture, maybe some Reiki, maybe some acupressure. Maybe there's something stuck. Maybe it's not even yours.

Maybe it's your mom's and it's the behavior that you inherited from her. And that's just the way of being that, you know? Okay, so that's how I use energy medicine. Yes.

And then I want to reiterate that, there is scientific evidence, for these energy fields and that these techniques are

super helpful in their a variety of ways of accessing this energy medicine.

and so, yeah, Megan, you run through the list, so the listeners could know, what to look for in their community. Sure. So first of all, I would encourage people to always look for certified or licensed professionals.

Book, Social Media, and Closing Remarks

so depending on the state you're in, for example, in the state of Florida, a Reiki practitioner who touches you with hands has to be licensed to touch, which means there are massage therapist or a nurse or a physician or a pet, or an OT.

anyone can get a Reiki, can do a Reiki training, but they can't touch you unless they're licensed to touch. Similarly, an acupuncturist should be a certified acupuncture physician, so just make sure that you're looking at massage therapists should be certified and licensed by the state.

So make sure that you are dealing with the person who's licensed, acupuncture, acupressure, Reiki, healing touch, therapeutic touch, biofeedback, massage therapy, sound healing.

I would say yoga therapy. yoga studios outside of the scope of licensing, often do chakra healings and sound healings that are group based. They do breathwork. That's group based.

I strongly encourage people to try those things if they haven't. and and from these are offshoots of other things. So if something appeals to you, I would say that unless there's a psychosis, it can't hurt you unless there's a psychotic diagnosis, or, a very uncontrolled depression or anxiety or it's just really expensive.

it's worth a try. this has been wonderful. Yeah, this has been just such a wonderful conversation. thank you so much. You have a book and a Instagram site.

Why don't you tell people about briefly about your book and how to find you in your social media channels? I'd love to. Thank you. So I wrote a book about two years ago called Monday Mantras with Megan, and it's a very approachable guide to meditation.

it gives you a mantra every week. so instead of asking you to do something hard and complicated every day, it's just something that you focus on each week.

And within each week there's another practice. It might be art, it might be a yoga pose. It might be an essential oil that you can use that focuses on the emotion of that week.

and my, my theory with, mindfulness practice is that, you know, when your cup is full, using mindfulness is just one, one way to help empty your cup of.

Sometimes we can't control all the things that go in. so it's Monday mantras with Megan. It's available on Amazon Books-A-Million Barnes and Noble. the online retailer, and the Instagram handle is @mondaymantraswithmegan Okay, this has been wonderful.

And again, thanks so much. Thank you so much. And go have a wonderful surf. Thank you.