

An Introduction to Functional Medicine

MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW how poorly they feel until they feel better. In fact, most of us don't recognize that fatigue, digestive problems, aches and pains, allergies, headaches, and more aren't just annoying symptoms. They are early clues to impending diseases that can disable and kill us.

Most heart disease starts in the womb. You can detect brain changes in teenagers that can predict the development of Alzheimer's disease. Blood tests in children can predict who will develop diabetes later in life. Most cancers take more than 30 years to grow to the size where they can be detected.

How can we address problems that we don't even know we have?

There is an answer. It lies in the revolution that is happening in medicine today.

That revolution is called **Functional Medicine**.

A Real Cure for Chronic Illness

One in three Americans has some type of chronic disease — and most of the rest of us are headed toward one. Most of us don't feel as well as we should or could if only we understood how to care for and feed our bodies the way they were designed to be.

Conventional medicine helps at the very end stages of disease. If you are very sick, have an emergency, break a bone or have a raging infection, then, yes, conventional acute care medicine is the right solution. As former emergency room doctor, I am glad we have this care when we need it.

But when I worked in the emergency room, I felt I was saving people just before (or sometimes after) they were washed downstream and over the waterfall to their death.

I began to wonder what led them to this point — what happened upstream in the process of disease and illness. What were the real causes of disease? If I could answer that question, then I thought I might be able to help prevent disease in the first place.

‘I didn’t know how bad I was feeling until I started feeling better.’ That is what my patients tell me every day.

The early influences on my thinking—from Asian philosophy, to nutritional biochemistry, to the study of ecology and ecosystems—all helped me form new and different views of health and disease.

I am one doctor who is part of a movement that is on the cutting edge of an entire shift in our scientific model of disease. It is called systems medicine, or functional medicine. It provides a way of understanding all the influences on our biology that are at the root of illness and how our lifestyle and environment interact with our genes to create the imbalances or balances that are the real determinants of disease or health.

This medical view does not reduce symptoms and diseases to their component parts and traditional specialties, but studies the entire ecology of the body and its environment. I have practiced this model for over 20 years and seen miracle after miracle, day after day. People don’t only get relief from symptoms, they get truly well.

It is the answer to the crisis we find ourselves in — an increasing epidemic of chronic disease and an impending economic collapse as more of our resources are put toward caring for the chronically ill. Today, medicine is in a serious predicament. The way we understand health and disease no longer reflects biological reality or the biological laws of nature. We need to understand that diseases are not fixed things that you catch or that just show up out of context, but are related to the environment, your diet, genes, and lifestyle. We need to understand that the body is an ecosystem and is part of a larger ecosystem. Understanding how all the parts relate and what disturbs our ecological balance

is more important than naming the disease, blaming the name for the problem, and thinking a drug will fix the disease.

I call this the “naming and blaming” game.

For example, depression doesn't just show up without cause or reason. It is related to a web of forces that we can influence and affect.

What systems medicine and functional medicine are about is *“thinking and linking.”* That means seeing all the patterns and relationships that make sense of your whole story — your lifestyle, stresses, genes, environment and how they interact with your biology to create imbalances that lead to disease.

Our current way of thinking is outdated, wrong, and will not help us address our declining health as individuals or as a society. That's why we are making no progress and even backsliding when it comes to addressing chronic disease.

Let's look at the data.

Chronic diseases affect 133 million Americans. That means in the average family of three, at least one person has a chronic disease. We are seeing an epidemic of auto-immune (24 million Americans), allergic (50 million Americans), and asthmatic (30 million Americans) diseases in this country. In addition, 20 percent of Americans (about 60 million people) have irritable bowel syndrome.

In fact, the rates of nearly every modern disease—autoimmune diseases, allergic diseases, digestive problems, heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes and dementia—are increasing. One in three children born today will have type 2 diabetes. One in two people over age 85 will develop dementia.

These problems are increasing in the population at a dramatic rate. And they affect everyone, either personally or through the suffering of someone close to them.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We have all the information we need right now to end or greatly reduce the suffering of so many. *The answer lies within the 7 Keys to Functional Medicine.*

I know this, because I watch miracles happen every day ...

The Promise of Functional Medicine

Every day in my office, I see patients who feel alive again after expecting to suffer their whole lives from chronic problems like bad digestion, headaches, fatigue, arthritis, allergies, hormonal problems, obesity, heart disease and depression. But within a few months (even weeks) their lives open up again. This week alone,

- I spoke to a 27-year-old woman who could not lose weight and was constantly tired. She finally lost 20 pounds effortlessly by getting treating her mercury toxicity.
- And there was the 78-year-old woman who felt she was on her way out with symptoms of fatigue, memory loss, joint pains and bad digestion. She now works out every day and is full of energy, simply by treating her nutritional deficiencies and getting back in balance.
- And the 30-year-old woman with PMS, migraines, stomachaches, acne, and polycystic ovarian syndrome who is completely better after getting her system back in balance.
- And the 47-year-old woman with chronic sinus infections and fatigue who hasn't had a problem all winter.

And that was just part of one day!

The reality is that most of us don't know how bad we feel until we start feeling better. We accept chronic symptoms as a necessary part of life. That is just not necessary. We have solutions today that you are not hearing about.

I have learned so much in the last 20 years of seeing patients, studying the scientific literature, combining my knowledge and observations with other doctors who are also practicing systems and Functional Medicine, and applying it in my practice. And I am committed to sharing that information with you because it works.

It is not perfect, nor can it address 100 percent of health problems 100 percent of the time, but it is a better mousetrap! This is the promise of Functional Medicine—the opportunity to cure or dramatically improve chronic problems that are poorly

addressed by conventional medicine, and to discover vital, vibrant good health at any age.

There are 7 fundamental new principles or concepts that help me navigate to the underlying causes of disease and that will help you achieve optimal wellness. These concepts are my new roadmap in the landscape of health and disease and I will share them with you so you can take advantage of them today. This is the future of medicine now. It will help you transform your health, and will contribute to the transformation of our “sick care” system to a health-care system!

Often when I explain this to people for the first time they remark on how simple and obvious this seems. Why didn't anyone explain it like that before?

First, we must understand how everything in our environment interacts with our genes to create health or disease, especially our diet and nutritional status. Air, water, microorganisms, exercise, trauma, psychosocial factors, environmental toxins and radiation also affect our genes and our health.

Second, we must understand how our hormones and brain chemistry influence nearly every aspect of our health, why they get out of balance, and how to get them back in balance.

Third, we must understand how most of us have smoldering hidden inflammation that will kill us until we learn how to control it.

Fourth, we must understand that our digestive system is at the core of our health, why it breaks down, and how to repair it.

Fifth, we must understand how toxins and problems with our detoxification or waste management systems lead to chronic health problems and how to optimize this detoxification system.

Sixth, we must understand the importance of energy—how we make it, why we lose it, and how to create more of it.

And **finally**, we must understand how the mind interacts with the body and how the body interacts with the mind to influence and affect each of our other systems.

Understand that these are really not all separate systems. They are part of a web of function and physiology that is at the root of both health and disease. This revolutionary new way of thinking about health and disease will guide you toward something many people have given up on experiencing—Optimal Wellness.