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Natural Medicine: Orthomolecular, Functional

The preceding chapters have hopefully laid the groundwork for why I place such an emphasis on the use of nutritional supplementation for treating and beating fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. Our body’s homeostatic mechanism, the HPA axis, and in fact, every cellular process depends on the proper amount of essential nutrients. The raw biochemical material that makes up our physical and mental being first originates from foods. The entire process is amazing: macromolecules of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins are ingeniously used to provide the vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, enzymes, and amino acids to the body as it manufactures bones, muscles, organs, cells, hormones, enzymes, antibodies, white blood cells, neurotransmitters, and other life-sustaining elements. We truly are what we eat.

I realize that the idea of treating, and even beating, such complicated illnesses as FMS and CFS/ME with nutrition and supplements might sound unreasonable at first—even simple-minded. However, no one suffers from a drug deficiency. I’ll
say this several times throughout this book: Drugs don’t make you healthy. They can be helpful, even lifesaving, and sometimes they are the best option. However, the only way to beat fibromyalgia and CFS/ME is to get healthy. **And the levels and interactions of vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and essential fatty acids determine our state of health.** These essential biochemicals are what make us tick. You can live without Ambien, Klonopin, Lyrica, and other drugs. But you would be dead in days without essential nutrients. They help determine every bodily function and state: sleep, levels of pain, energy, mood, immune function, digestion, elimination, thyroid production, metabolism, and more. Every cell in the body is wholly dependent on having the right amounts and right interaction of these nutrients to work correctly.

**Amino acids and B vitamins are needed to make the feel-good neurotransmitter, serotonin, and also dopamine, norepinephrine, and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA). Magnesium, along with calcium, regulates every cell by controlling what enters and exits through the outer cell membrane. The amino acid L-tyrosine, along with selenium and iodine, makes the thyroid hormone thyroxine. Vitamin B5 is needed for proper adrenal gland function. (I’ll provide an in-depth look at vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and essential fatty acids later in this book.)**

#### Orthomolecular Medicine

When we establish nutritional deficiencies, our health suffers. Man-made chemicals (synthetic prescription drugs) can’t correct these deficiencies, but a nutritional-replacement therapeutic program can. This is the very premise of orthomolecular medicine, which means, “right molecules in the right concentration.”

Linus Pauling, two-time winner of the Nobel Prize, is regarded as one of the greatest biochemists of our time. He defines orthomolecular medicine as “the preservation of good health and the
treatment of disease by varying the concentrations in the human body of substances that are normally present in the body.” This concept involves a medical approach based on the physiological and enzymatic actions of specific nutrients present in the body, such as vitamins, minerals, and amino acids. The idea that to beat a disease, one has simply to “get healthy” may seem trivial to those with such life-robbing illnesses as FMS and CFS. Still, it’s hard to argue with the results.

**Functional Medicine**

Orthomolecular medicine goes hand-in-hand with another form of holistic, patient-centered medicine: functional medicine. It addresses the underlying causes of disease, using a systems-oriented approach and engaging both patient and practitioner in a therapeutic partnership. It is an evolution in the practice
of medicine that better addresses the health-care needs of the twenty-first century. By shifting the traditional, disease-centered focus of medical practice to a more patient-centered approach, functional medicine addresses the whole person, not just an isolated set of symptoms. It’s concerned more with optimizing a person’s bodily systems rather than covering up symptoms with prescription drugs.

The infamous Mehmet Oz devoted an entire episode of The Doctor Oz Show to functional medicine. You’ll be hearing more and more about functional medicine as its popularity grows.

**Vitamin and Mineral Supplements**

Synthetic drugs may be helpful at times, but they always have an inherent ability to cause harm. Not only are nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and essential fatty acids unharful, the body depends on them for survival. The body knows what to do with—even depends on—vitamin B6, for example. The same certainly can’t be said for Lyrica. The World Health Organization’s definition of health is “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” These words advocate to us the need to correct the biochemical causes of disease rather than merely covering up the symptoms with drugs.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid stated in a recent report that the nation spent $140.6 billion in the year 2000 on prescription drugs. In 2011, Americans spent $320 billion dollars. And of course this number is rapidly escalating; over one billion prescriptions were written last year. But even though the United States spends more money on health care per capita than any other country in the world, The World Health Organization ranks the overall health of the United States as fifteenth among the twenty-five industrialized countries.

Even with this dismal ranking, things in the United States are changing. A new paradigm is emerging, one based on taking responsibility for our own health through abstinence from dangerous habits—like nicotine, trans-fats, sedentary lifestyles, and excessive stress—and through proactive behavior like regular exercise, healthy diet decisions, and optimal nutrition.
There continues to be a growing interest in the use of vitamin and mineral supplements. Doctors, researchers, and the public at large are realizing that yes, there is quite a bit of research to support the use of vitamins for the prevention and treatment of disease. Do a Pubmed search for “vitamin research studies,” and you’ll get back hundreds of thousands of results. Even the national government is shifting its understanding of nutrients:

The Food and Nutrition Board [of the National Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Medicine] decided that a new, more comprehensive approach was necessary to setting dietary guidelines. New research was showing the importance of higher intakes of some nutrients for promoting health (preventing chronic disease) and performance; there was tremendous growth in food fortification and the use of dietary supplements; and the existing RDAs [recommended daily allowances] did not adequately distinguish guidelines for groups and populations from those for individuals.

So the Board replaced and expanded the current RDAs with a series of reference values called Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) to provide recommended nutrient intakes.³

The new DRIs take into account the age and sex of the citizen, address the question of upper limits, and provide both an average measure and a recommended measure of intake. (They still contain a listing titled “RDA” that is meant to apply to the majority of the population.) I sincerely hope that this will help encourage Americans to take a serious look at their dismal vitamin and mineral intake.

We’ll see in later chapters (29–32) how vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids, and certain enzymes, when properly supplemented, can provide profoundly beneficial results for those suffering from poor health. Below is a sample listing of essential nutrients and their contributions to the treatment of FMS and CFS.

› **Vitamin E** helps to relieve pain in CFS patients. It can also improve nighttime leg cramps, which interfere with sleep.

› **Vitamin C** boosts the immune system by increasing natural-killer (NK) cells, B cells, and T cells.
Magnesium and malic acid have been found by controlled studies to be effective in relieving the symptoms of FMS. Magnesium is essential to healthy muscle function, and, working with malic acid, it increases cellular energy, reduces pain, and enhances immune function by increasing NK cells. Magnesium is also a natural muscle relaxant and critical for the relief of muscle pain.

Inositol enhances the immune system by increasing NK cells.

Selenium supports the immune system by enhancing antibody production.

Vitamin D regulates many immune functions, the pain threshold, moods, and other important functions.

Amino acids, such as glycine, serine, taurine, and tyrosine, are essential for the production of energy in the body and for brain function.

Zinc supports the immune system by enhancing white-blood-cell activity and supporting healthy antigen-antibody binding. These nutrients are amazing, aren’t they? Sadly, though, many of them are deficient in our society. And it’s no secret; numerous published studies demonstrate the need for vitamin and mineral supplementation. Our food supply is tainted with poisonous chemicals and laden with preservatives that rob the body of needed nutrients. We simply can no longer get all the nutrients we need from the foods we eat.

Please keep in mind that even the new RDA is meant to apply to an already healthy individual with no chronic illness. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that getting 100 percent RDA in everything will reverse your symptoms. Far from it. You might require two or three or even ten times the RDA to correct your imbalance—depending on your deficit and other conditions that might be aggravating that deficit (such as leaky gut). And you may require testing to learn which nutrients are actually deficient and by how much.

Fertile Soil
We are all gardeners. We are given a body, mind, and spirit, all of which must be nurtured in order to grow. What we eat, drink, breathe, and think determines the health of our garden.
The soil must be free of weeds, stumps, and stones for the optimal growth of our plants (cells). The healthier, more vital our cells are, the better we feel. Soil that is full of essential nutrients yields healthy, robust plants. Soil that is depleted of nutrients produces inferior and disease-ridden plants. The soil is the key. Our bodies don’t make essential nutrients, so we must get them from our diet. Modern food processing has stripped most of the nutrients out of our foods. You can’t get the needed quantities of these nutrients from the foods you eat, even if you eat six servings of fruits and vegetables a day!

A U.S. Food and Drug Administration study, which analyzed over 234 foods over two years, found the average American diet to have less than 80 percent of the RDA of one or more of the following: calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper, and manganese. Other studies have demonstrated magnesium deficiency in well over 50 percent of the population. Two-thirds of American children are deficient in more than two essential vitamins or minerals. Most all children are deficient in omega-3s (fish oil), and many suffer poor mental abilities, including ADD, because of their essential-fatty-acid deficiencies. Please don’t let your children inherit your health problems; start them on a good multivitamin and essential-fatty-acid product! My seven-year-old son has been taking a multivitamin and mineral and essential-fatty-acid supplement since he was two years old.

Always take the best, most comprehensive multivitamin and mineral you can, and then build around it. You will save money and help ensure that what you are taking will be absorbed and utilized. Study after study shows that those who take a multivitamin reduce their risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and many other modern-day illnesses. Centrum Silver, One A Day, and other heavily marketed multivitamins are mostly garbage. They are full of additives, colorings, fillers, and artificial ingredients, which often prevent them from being digested and absorbed. Some brands simply pass wholly undigested in our stools.
Even if you don’t notice an immediate difference in taking the right supplements (though most do), stay with it. By following this advice, you will get healthier and ultimately feel better. Studies have shown that each individual’s biochemistry is different. Because we are as unique on the inside as we are on the outside, one person may need 1,000 mg. of vitamin C while her co-worker needs 3,000 mg. a day to be at optimal health. That’s why we need to take more than the “average” person might need of supplements.

As people age, they also become less able to absorb some vitamins from their diets. (Could this be one of the reasons pre-senile dementia and Alzheimer’s disease have increased so dramatically over the last few decades? As people age, they also become less able to absorb some vitamins from their diets.) The same is true of people of any age who are suffering from chronic illness.

Arguments Against Natural Medicine
The three concerns about natural medicine, specifically supplementation, that I hear the most often are questions about whether or not it is necessary, effective, and safe. I’ll answer these three questions below.

1. “My Doctor Says It’s Not Necessary.”
Many so-called experts will tell you not to worry about taking vitamins if you are eating a balanced diet. If you ever encounter a doctor who says this, simply smile and head for the nearest exit! By making such a statement, this physician has demonstrated herself to be forty years behind in the research. How could someone who is supposed to be looking after our health be so ignorant to think that eating bleached bread, toxic meats, allergy-producing dairy products, and nutritionally void simple carbohydrates could provide the necessary vitamins and minerals the body requires to be healthy? Remember, most medical doctors receive only three classroom hours of nutritional education! This isn’t their fault, but they have no excuse for not staying abreast of latest findings that appear in their very own medical journals.

The fact is that most of our foods are processed, and therefore the nutrients have been leached out of them. For instance, you would need to consume 5,000 calories per day (mostly fat) in
order to get the recommend minimum (400 IU) of vitamin E, and 12,000 calories per day to get the minimum amount of chromium. As a result, 70 percent of the population is deficient in magnesium, 65 percent is deficient in zinc, 48 percent is deficient in calcium, and 56 percent is deficient in vitamin C. And, research has suggested, people who drink alcohol may need extra folic acid.

Anyone can benefit from a good multivitamin and mineral formula, and thousands of studies demonstrate its benefits. Daily use reduces the incidence of heart disease, heart attack, stroke, glaucoma, macular degeneration, type-2 diabetes, senile dementia, and various cancers.

2. “I Already Tried Vitamins.”

You might be thinking, I’ve taken a vitamin for years, and I haven’t noticed a difference. You probably haven’t been taking enough to even make a dent in your deficiencies. If you compare Centrum or One A Day vitamins to our Essential Therapeutics formulas, you’ll notice that ours have fifty times — and in some cases, one hundred times — the recommended daily allowance (RDA). The RDA is an outdated system that does not take into account the depletion of our nutrient-rich topsoil, environmental pollutants, chemical food processing, the addition of artificial ingredients, and the increased demands placed on an individual’s homeostatic system in the twenty-first century.

So, nearly as criminal as not recommending vitamin and mineral supplements is the recommendation of them based on the RDA (or, as I call it, “recommended disease allowance” — just enough to keep you from getting beriberi or scurvy, but certainly not enough for optimal health). It was never intended to advance health, only to prevent deficiency diseases like rickets. Taking the minimum amount of a nutrient to prevent gross deficiency doesn’t help those people who want to be truly healthy and not just free of severe symptoms. And optimal health should be the goal for all of us.

Sharon

I’d say along with the adrenal supplements, the CFS/FMS Formula
has made the biggest difference in how well I feel. If I miss a few days of either supplement, I start to feel sluggish and run down. I’ve taken dozens of different supplements over the last few years, but none have seemed to have helped like the ones Dr. Murphree recommended. I like the convenience of taking a pack in the morning and one in the afternoon. Before, I had to carry pills around in my pockets or purse. Sometimes I’d lose them, sometimes they would melt and stain my clothes. And I was buying bottles of all different things. So usually I would just lose interest and give up.

Years ago, our ancestors ate locally grown food harvested from mineral-rich soil that was free of pesticides and toxic fertilizers. Their meats had no added hormones and antibiotics, and they didn’t eat processed foods robbed of their nutrients, and their foods weren’t loaded with preservatives and simple sugars. Their diets consisted mainly of whole grains and vegetables with a little dairy and organic meat. They didn’t need supplements. Life is different for us. We’re also living a lot longer, and as we age, our nutrient needs can increase dramatically.

3. “Such High Doses Can’t Be Safe.”
One of the arguments against megavitamin and mineral treatment is that high doses may cause adverse reactions. Let me present some statistics to you and let you decide for yourself.

The American Medical Association reports that death from medical errors is now the third leading cause of death in the United States, behind only heart disease and cancer. As reported in its journal, over 250,000 Americans die each year from medical therapies, including at least 113,000 from the negative effects of prescription medications. The total number of deaths from vitamin and mineral therapy during the years of 1983 to 1990 was zero.

Nevertheless, problems can occur. But if symptoms arise, reducing or stopping the therapy will almost always put an end to any side effects. Working with a physician who specializes in vitamin, mineral, or herbal therapies will help you avoid negative effects in the first place. In the ten years I’ve been using orthomolecular doses of vitamins, minerals, and amino acids, both intravenously and orally, there has not been a single major side effect observed in my patients.
Dealing with Medical Prejudice

In the nineteenth century, a young Hungarian doctor named Ignaz Semmelweis advocated that doctors wash their hands between patients. Dr. Semmelweis found that by doing so, the incidence of infectious disease was drastically reduced.

His peers called him a quack; they ostracized him and continued to perform vaginal exams, surgeries, and other medical therapies without washing between patients.

In spite of the fact that Semmelweis was able to consistently demonstrate that mortality rates of patients declined drastically with proper antiseptic practices, his peers clung to their beliefs. Not because they had ever been proven, but because that was the way it had always been done. Because of their reluctance to change, even in the face of what we would all agree was an obvious and commonsense approach to reducing the spread of disease, thousands of people died.

Semmelweis was eventually committed to an insane asylum where he died at age forty-two. It would take another 132 years before doctors would realize that sanitary precautions should be incorporated into daily practice procedures.

In 1928, Dr. Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin. His discovery was discussed the very next year in the *British Journal of Experimental Pathology*. Dr. Fleming was ignored by the medical community, and it was not until some fifteen years later that penicillin began to be used to treat bacterial infections. Why did it take so long?

It’s because, as I put it, **doctors are usually down on what they themselves aren’t up on**. Like everyone else, they often aren’t open to what they don’t understand. Could this be the main reason traditional doctors don’t acknowledge the potential health-restoring abilities of nutritional therapy? For most of them, yes. But some are simply (and contentedly) brainwashed into believing that drug therapy is the only real medical philosophy with science-based evidence. Either way, ignorance is ignorance!

So why are so many conventional doctors quick to ridicule nutritional therapy, even though it has been consistently effective in treating fibromyalgia? It just doesn’t make sense.
The usual accusation is that “there are no controlled studies.” But don’t believe that for a second. There are numerous studies that validate the use of nutritional supplements to manage and often correct the symptoms of poor health. There are over 1,000 studies demonstrating the positive effects of various supplements and foods in the treatment of hypertension alone. And hundreds of studies demonstrate magnesium’s benefits in treating high blood pressure, angina, heart arrhythmias, chronic pain, muscle spasms, anxiety, mitral valve prolapse, and fatigue. What’s more, thousands of studies validate the benefits of taking a multivitamin-and-mineral formula on a daily basis. These studies have been reported in medical journals, popular newspapers, and magazines. A good daily formula reduces the incidence of heart disease, heart attack, stroke, glaucoma, depression, macular degeneration, type-2 diabetes, senile dementia, and various cancers.

Dr. Janet Travell, White House physician for Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, and professor emeritus of internal medicine at George Washington University, cowrote Myofascial Pain and Dysfunction: The Trigger Point Manual, which is acknowledged as the authoritative work on muscle pain. In one chapter alone, she references 317 studies showing that problems such as hormonal, vitamin, and mineral deficiencies can contribute to muscle pain and soreness.

And modern medicine itself, despite the millions of dollars spent to promote its superiority over other forms of health care, is largely an art—with a lot of unproven science. The Office of Technology Assessment, under the authority of the Library of Congress, published a year-long study entitled, “Assessing the Efficacy and Safety of Medical Technology.” The study showed that only 10–20 percent of all present-day medical practices have been shown to be beneficial by scientifically controlled clinical trials. The study concluded that the vast majority of medical procedures now being utilized routinely by physicians are “unproven.”

Or how about, “Nutritional supplements aren’t regulated and therefore are dangerous.” Too much might make you queasy, but no one dies from informed use of vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients! The same can’t be said about drugs.
The great physician Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, “A medicine... is always directly hurtful; it may sometimes be indirectly beneficial. I firmly believe that if most of the pharmacopoeia [prescription drugs] were sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be all the better for Mankind and all the worse for the fishes.”

For instance, Propulsid, a drug used for reflux and gastroparesis, has caused severe heart-rhythm abnormalities. The original warning read, “Due to reports of serious heart arrhythmias and deaths in people taking Propulsid (Cisapride), the label had been changed to reflect these dangers. In June of 1998, the FDA issued a statement reporting thirty-eight deaths in the United States from people taking Propulsid.” I’ll stick with my over-the-counter digestive enzymes, thanks.

My Experience with Natural Medicine
I’ve been a chiropractor for years and strongly believe in the benefits of chiropractic, but when I began to add diet and nutritional advice into my practice, I started seeing significant changes in my patients. They were little things at first, like recommending magnesium to a patient and finding that he didn’t need to see me for chiropractic every week after all. I found that patients who took a good multivitamin and mineral supplement had less pain, more energy, and better health overall. Then I was hooked. I read dozens of medical, nutritional, and biochemistry books. I traveled around the country and trained with some of the masters of nutritional and integrative medicine. I took all the post-graduate classes I could on nutrition and biochemistry and then went back and relearned all the biochemistry I had forgotten from chiropractic school.

Slowly my practice changed from about seventy or eighty musculoskeletal patients a day to about fifteen or twenty-five “medical misfits” a day. These complicated and challenging patients had either fallen through the conventional medical cracks by not responding to treatment, or they were seeking a more natural way to restore their health. I have learned a great deal about integrating conventional and alternative methods, and I’ve found that correcting a person’s biochemistry is the key to restoring her inborn healing mechanisms. Prescription
medications can, in some cases, be helpful, but they can never take the place of our own self-regulating, God-given healing mechanisms. This doesn’t mean I don’t refer to medical doctors; I often do. But now that I’ve been on both sides of the fence (conventional medicine and natural medicine—see my story in ch. 1), I know that the type of nutritional medicine I practice works! Even if conventional medicine insists otherwise.

Today, patients call, email, or travel from all over the world to consult with me. These “medical misfits” have usually been to dozens of medical doctors, sometimes including those at Mayo and Johns Hopkins. Yet, conventional medicine has failed them. But some little chiropractic nutritionist in Birmingham, Alabama, is able to help them.

The Four Faces of Fibro

It’s not just doctors, but patients, who show quite a bit of prejudice toward natural approaches to fibromyalgia. However, I give the patients a much greater amount of grace on this front. Often, they’ve earned it. That said, there are four types of fibro sufferers I’ve met in my years of research and treatment: the skeptic, the hopeless, the witch hunter, and the ready.

1. The Skeptic
Here is a typical email, one of many I receive from time to time, questioning my authenticity:

I am skeptical of any doctor who says they have the answer. If you have it, why isn’t it documented and every doctor have it?

I have wasted so much money that I am scared to see you and spend more and more on tests and visits and more supplements. What can you say to me to change my mind? What would be the protocol after that first visit? Do you file insurance? Thank you, Denise

The skeptic can’t imagine that, one, there is a cure, and two, every doctor in America isn’t familiar with it. Well, she’s right about the first point, at least in part. I offer no cure, nor do I mention a cure in my books, seminars, teleconferences, blogs, articles, or any correspondence. Yes, you can reverse your fibro-
myalgia, feel good again, and get your life back. I’ve helped thousands do so. But this is no cure. Fibro is always lurking in the dark, waiting for the person to get back under too much stress, get run down, break down, then return to full-fledged flare-up.

Denise, I understand. Really I do. Fibro sucks the life out of you. Patients have been to doctor after doctor and taken handfuls of the latest, greatest new fibro drug or supplement, and still they feel little to no improvement.

After years of searching and being disappointed, who wouldn’t be skeptical?

But to answer Denise’s questions, no, I usually don’t accept insurance, because 85–90 percent of my practice is phone consults with patients around the world, and these aren’t covered by insurance. The initial, brief new-patient consult is for us to get to know each other. I’ve found that patients want to find out if I am for real and if I know what I’m talking about. They want to know if I can help them and what I recommend. For me, it allows me to do some detective work, decide if I can help the patient, and if so, accept her case. I don’t accept every new patient into my practice, only the ones I know I can help and know will do as I ask them to do.

And Denise, please know this. I’m not out to drain your pocketbook. You don’t need to fly out to visit me in Birmingham or go to a large medical-specialty clinic (e.g., a “Fibro and Fatigue Center”) or spend hundreds of dollars a month on drugs, month after month after month. You can purchase my book at any bookstore or online, get your questions answered at one of my online teleconferences, and purchase everything you need at your local health-food store.

Why don’t all doctors know what I know? Traditional medicine doesn’t care about reversing fibromyalgia. Nor do drug companies. There are no drug companies beating a path to my door,
hoping that I will simplify their lives by making their drugs obsole
te. No large medical associations are calling on me, and research
ers ignore me. Why? Because there is no money to be made by re
erasing the symptoms of fibromyalgia with natural supplements.

Denise, I certainly wouldn’t say that I have all the answers. But I am convinced that I have the best protocols out there.

2. The Hopeless

As I mentioned, I can’t help every patient that I consult with or whom I come into contact with through my books, blog, articles, videos, seminars, teleconferences, or Facebook page. I can’t help those who I know have given up all hope of ever feeling good again.

Unfortunately, this seems to be a large group. They have been beaten down year after year by this terrible illness, been to numerous doctors, tried numerous pills, and continue to get worse every year. They lose all hope of ever feeling good again. Sadly, so very sadly, these people don’t know they have other options besides drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs, and more drugs. And they aren’t willing to risk trying anything new: “No one can help me; my case is too bad.”

These folks tend to spend a large amount of time on support
group chat sites, commiserating with other hopeless folks in search of some kind of comfort. They are stuck in a take-a-pill mentality and can’t imagine doing the hard work of getting healthy and reversing their fibromyalgia.

3. The Witch Hunter

Related to the hopeless are the witch hunters. Like the Salem witch hunters in the late seventeenth century, this group likes to ridicule, tar and feather, and refute anyone who would dare offer up a solution and a hope that yes, those with fibromyalgia can feel good again.

Now this is a different group from the hopeless. The hopeless have given up hope out of exhaustion; the witch hunters revel in the idea that their illness, fibromyalgia, is unique and could never be helped. They are tragically destined for a life of misery at the hands of fibromyalgia.
They like to remind anyone who will listen that fibromyalgia can’t be cured. They are quick to ridicule any doctor, product, or therapist that hints at reversing its symptoms, so firmly embedded is their conviction that fibromyalgia is a life sentence of doom and gloom.

This group controls most online support groups and tries to take over comment boxes and Facebook discussions. While there, they are quick to squash any posts that have a positive tone. Therapies that are reported as helpful are labeled as quackery, only existing to prey on the unfortunate victim of FMS. (See, it’s not only doctors who can get stuck in the past!) This is the main reason I stopped speaking at support-group meetings and never join support-group chats. On Facebook, I have to politely decline to engage with these people. I’ve been burned too many times trying to helpful.

4. The Ready
Thankfully, there is a growing group of fibromyalgia patients who have become discouraged with the status quo of ineffective traditional medicine and though discouraged, still hold out hope that they can feel better. This group is proactive. They are ready for a change, ready for a breakthrough. They don’t let their insurance company determine which specialists they see or what pills they take. They don’t settle for “living with it.” They ignore the doom and gloom, seek out helpful information, and work with practitioners who can actually help them.

This is the group who makes me rise early in the morning to read the latest health journals, searching for anything that may help my hardest cases, and who causes me to work harder every year. This is the group of folks I spend most days working with and helping — and I am so very thankful to do so!

You Might Have a Stupid Doctor If...
I’m not trying to be nasty, but I have to say it. There are some stupid doctors out there. Though I’d never suggest stopping your medical treatment out of the blue or without telling your doctor about it, I recommend that you think hard about whether or not you might need to dump your doctor and look for medical care from someone who can actually help you.
You might have a stupid doctor if... he tells you fibromyalgia doesn’t exist.

You might have a stupid doctor if... she dismisses your symptoms as nothing more than you being a hypochondriac and wanting attention.

You might have a stupid doctor if... he tells you that more exercise, more sleep, or losing weight is all you need to do for your symptoms: “You just need to improve your sex life, take a vacation, lose some weight. You’re just depressed. It’s just PMS.” Give me a break. This doctor doesn’t have a clue!

You might have a stupid doctor if... she tells you that all your blood work looks normal, so you must be a “drug seeker.” It may not occur to this stupid doctor that you never mentioned you wanted pain medication and that in fact, you have repeatedly declined to take pain meds in the past. What you are really seeking is to feel better.

You might have a stupid doctor if... he refuses to order the proper tests, especially but not limited to specialized thyroid tests. Simply following the herd and only ordering routine tests is similar to trying to critique The Sound of Music after only watching the first twenty minutes. Your synopsis: Julie Andrews plays a quirky nun. What about the Captain, his children, the Nazis, the wedding, and the escape? There’s so much to the movie that you’re missing!

My point is that truly stupid doctors are happy to stay stupid. They don’t care to practice the art of doctoring, being a detective, investigating anything outside the routine. They’re happy to follow the herd, not make any waves, and dispatch the drugs the pharmaceutical rep asks them to, based on “how we’ve always done it.” They order only “the normal” thyroid tests: thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) and T4 (Thyroxine).

You can bet it burns me up that patients go to their doctor with all the symptoms of low thyroid — fatigue, depression, anxiety, elevated cholesterol, brain fog, weight gain, cold hands, cold feet, swelling, tingling pains, constipation, hair loss — only to be told their blood work looks fine so their thyroid must be, too.
They are then only too happy to promote life-draining drugs to cover up the hypothyroid symptoms: Ritalin for low energy, Lipitor for elevated cholesterol, Zoloft for depression, Lyrica for tingling pain, and the list continues from there.

The patient’s symptoms and poor health continue to worsen year after year, when all the stupid doctor needed to do was run the right tests or think outside the box and recommend prescription or over-the-counter thyroid-hormone therapy. Correct the cause—low thyroid—and all the symptoms go away!

You might have a stupid doctor if…she dismisses the very real condition known as adrenal fatigue. It occurs when your stress-coping glands, the adrenals, become too worn out to perform properly. Stress is definitely a catalyst for disease! They will tell you your adrenal-fatigue symptoms—low energy, brain fog, low immune function, depression, poor sleep, weight gain, etc.—are a natural part of getting older or are all in your head.

Why? Because doctors are evaluating blood work for disease, not function. They don’t consider the fact that your adrenals aren’t functioning at optimal levels (to allow you to deal with and rebound from stress). They only care if you have total adrenal failure, Addison’s disease. (Blood tests won’t show adrenal fatigue, but a four-sample, sixteen-hour saliva test will.)

You might have a stupid doctor if…he has you taking two different SSRI or SSNRI antidepressant medications. These drugs, including Savella, Cymbalta, Effexor, Celexa, Zoloft, Paxil, Pristiq, and Prozac are supposed to help your brain use the happy hormones serotonin and or norepinephrine. It makes no sense to be on more than one of them at the same time. You only increase the risk of more side effects (such as poor sleep, depression, anxiety, and muscle pain). Mixing these drugs is a sign of a lazy and stupid doctor!

You might have a stupid doctor if…she has you taking a stimulant drug or drugs and a relaxant or tranquilizing drug. Examples include taking Ritalin, Adderall, Strattera, Intuniv, Vyvanse, Wellbutren, Effexor, Cymbalta, Savella, or Pristiq along with a benzodiazepine drug such as Ativan, Xanax, Seroquel, Klonpin, Valium, or Busbar. One drug is revving you up, and the other is making you a zombie.
Lazy or stupid doctors are happy to overmedicate you with mind-numbing, often addictive drugs for the rest of your life. They don’t take time to study how to naturally reduce your anxiety through the supplementation of amino acids (which actually make up the calming and/or stimulating brain hormones serotonin and norepinephrine).

You might have a stupid doctor if...he has you taking a potentially stimulating drug while you are complaining of insomnia. It used to surprise me to see doctors recommending their patients take a SSRI or SSNRI at bedtime. Why? Because these drugs not only inhibit the reuptake of the calming hormone serotonin, they can also inhibit the reuptake of the stimulating hormone adrenaline. Now I may not be “a real doctor”; I’m only a little chiropractor nutritionist, but I know enough about biochemistry and physiology — especially after eighteen years’ experience treating fibro — to know you don’t do anything to potentially sabotage deep, restorative sleep.

Timed-release stimulant drugs, including some antidepressants and Ritalin, are notorious for causing sleep disorders. And you should know that these drugs deplete your natural sleep hormone, melatonin.

Stupid, stupid, and more stupid.

But don’t get discouraged! I can’t begin to count the numerous patients over the years who have had remarkable health recoveries simply from taking a good multivitamin-and-mineral formula. Of course for my fibro and CFS/ME patients, it’s much more complicated than taking a single formula; however, even these patients often see major improvement in one or more of their chief symptoms from simple nutritional therapy alone.

You doctor might give up, but don’t you give up. There is a “wonder cure” out there, after all...and it’s your own body!

Notes

2. See Suzette Lohmeyer, “Most U.S. Adults Short of Meeting Fruit and


For Further Reading and Research
› Myofascial Pain and Dysfunction: The Trigger Point Manual by Dr. Janet Travell and Dr. David Simons.