

A new medical discipline may be taking hold

By Cliff Slater

There is an emerging medical discipline, termed Functional Medicine that may one day change the practice of medicine in the U.S. It is already being used in the Cleveland Clinic and the Cancer Treatment Centers of America and by many physicians across the country.

Here's the story: Have you noticed that while few people had even heard of autism before 1970, it now affects one in 150 children, an astonishing increase even allowing for our improved ability to recognize this disease? Or that obesity rates for adults have tripled in the last 50 years? Or, that there has been a 400 percent increase in diabetes in the last 20 years? We are facing an epidemic of diseases.

The Institute for Functional Medicine points to a growing body of evidence that the surge in food additives, and other changes in our food intake over the last 50 years, as being one of the primary causes of this epidemic.

Take the changes in the common hamburger, for example.

The 1950 bun used to consist of just wheat flour, milk, margarine, sugar, yeast, and salt. Today, in addition to the above, you are likely to find high fructose corn syrup, soybean oil, calcium sulfate, sodium stearoyl lactylate, tricalcium phosphate, ethoxylated mono and diglycerides, datem, dicalcium phosphate, calcium dioxide, and/or sorbic acid), ammonium chloride, ammonium phosphate, diammonium phosphate, ammonium sulfate, monocalcium phosphate, calcium propionate, and soy lecithin.

No wonder these buns don't rot.

Then there's the hamburger meat itself. On the ranch you butchered the grass-fed steer, ground up the beef, and that was it. Today, the steer is likely grown in a meat factory and fed corn, anti-biotics, hormones, and steroids to keep it fast-growing and sort of "well." In the meat processing phase, the beef is subjected to tenderizers, softeners, anti-oxidants, citric acid, and so on.

That is what you get to eat for a simple hamburger, but if you wish to add cheese, ketchup, relish or mustard, then we will need to open up a whole new compendium of chemicals.

The government tests these additives, of course, and they are found to be "safe." The problem is that with literally thousands of food additives in combination with thousands of new environmental chemicals now floating around, there is no way to test all these chemicals in all possible permutations — it would be in the trillions.

Because many of us have been overloaded with chemicals, Functional Medicine doctors look for underlying systemic imbalances in their patients as causes of illness and then mitigating them by changes in nutrition and exercise, and using supplements where indicated.

These physicians emphasize eating organically, having fresh vegetables rather than processed ones, meat that is grass-fed and chemical free, reducing sugar and sweetener intake, forgoing those foods which tests indicate the patient's body does not tolerate well, taking appropriate vitamins and the right probiotics to care for the essential 100 trillion bacteria in our intestines.

Patients achieve beneficial results when they make a personal effort to both counter and avoid these environmental dangers. They experience significant weight loss without reducing calories, greatly improved bodily functions and significant improvement and even recovery from diseases such as diabetes and eczema.

These doctors believe that health is not just the absence of disease; good health should be measured in how vital we feel in our daily lives.

But, my pragmatic friends say, why go through all that? Why not just take pills? These physicians respond that if you are feeling really great, and are quite satisfied with just masking the symptoms of all the things that ail you, take the pills; it is your body.

On the other hand, judging from the increasing amount of gluten-free and organic foods, grass-fed beef, and similar products showing up lately in supermarket shelves, many consumers are concerned enough to want to change their eating habits.

Should this approach to medical practice take hold, and "wellness" predominates over "pillness" then it could lead to a significant reduction in general medical costs. We will see.

Sources for the information in this article are below and at www.cliffslater.com

Endnotes:

Para. 1.

- <http://www.clevelandclinicmeded.com/medicalpubs/diseasemanagement/preventive-medicine/integrative-medicine/>
- <http://www.cancercenter.com/southwestern/doctors-and-clinicians/bette-bischoff/>
- <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/articles/2011/04/12/medical-schools-embrace-alternative-medicine> "Medical Schools Embrace Alternative Medicine"

Para. 2.

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obesity_in_the_United_States
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obesity>
- <http://www.diabetesandenvironment.org/home/incidence/historical>
- <http://ourhealthandenvironment.wordpress.com/2012/04/16/phthalates-and-diabetes-is-there-a-connection/>

Para. 5-9.

- http://www.labelwatch.com/prod_results.php?pid=162507
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gut_flora

Paras. 10-13.

- <http://www.functionalmedicine.org/>
“Functional medicine 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 healthcare needs of the 21st 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. Functional medicine practitioners spend time with their patients, listening to their histories and looking at the interactions among genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors that can influence long-term health and complex, chronic disease. In this way, functional medicine supports the unique expression of health and vitality for each individual.”
- <http://www.ornishspectrum.com/>
“People often think that advances in medicine have to be a new drug, a new laser, or a surgical intervention to be powerful—something really high-tech and expensive. They often have a hard time believing that the simple choices that we make in our lives each day—what we eat, how we respond to stress, whether or not we smoke, how much we exercise and the quality of our relationships—can make such a powerful difference in our health, our well-being, and our survival, but they often do.”
- <http://drhyman.com/>
“MARK HYMAN, MD is dedicated to identifying and addressing the root causes of chronic illness through a groundbreaking whole-systems medicine approach called Functional Medicine. He is a family physician, a six-time New York Times bestselling author, and an international leader in his field. Through his private practice, education efforts, writing, research, and advocacy, he empowers others to stop managing symptoms and start treating the underlying causes of illness, thereby tackling our chronic-disease epidemic.”
- <http://www.drfuhrman.com/>
“Combining the latest data from clinical tests, nutritional research, and results from thousands of patients, Dr. Fuhrman proves that super immunity exists and is well within reach for those who choose it. We all have the ability to live healthier, stronger, and longer than ever before.”
- <http://www.tcolincampbell.org/>
“In a recent interview with Wolf Blitzer on CNN, former President Bill Clinton officially addressed the circulating rumors surrounding his dramatic weight loss and change in eating habits. When asked to describe the type of diet he was on, President Clinton explained, “The short answer is I went on essentially a plant-based diet. I live on beans, legumes, vegetables, fruit, and no dairy.” The former President credits both Dr. T. Colin Campbell, and his son, Dr. Thomas Campbell, authors of The China Study, as well as Drs. Caldwell Esselstyn and Dean Ornish for their pioneering work in the field of plant-based nutrition.”