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Newsletter

THIS MONTH

May 2019

Medications: The Answer or the Problem?

Western medicine treats the presenting illness primarily with prescription medications or procedures. I wonder, is that the best approach? Last week, I attended a conference on how Integrative Medicine approaches illness by using a combination of methods as a better way to resolve challenging mental and physical health conditions.

Integrative Medicine, as defined by Duke Integrative Medicine, is "An approach that is grounded in the definition of health." The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

I was personally astonished at the outcomes of these alternative approaches to treating illnesses such as addiction, pain, and anxiety and even Alzheimer's and MCI (mild cognitive impairment).

I counsel families who are at a quandary of what to do with illnesses that do not seem to be responding to treatments. The patients/clients are often on 8-15 different medications. That alone has to be contributing to some of the behaviors or the decline. Integrative medicine looks for effective interventions that are natural and less invasive. Each patient might get a different formula based on lab results that look at many markers that guide the physician in addressing the illness or condition by using diet, supplements, counseling, mindfulness, and exercise.

According to Duke Integrative Medicine, the principals that define integrative medicine include the following:

- ▶ The patient and practitioner are partners in the healing process.
- ▶ All factors that influence health, wellness and disease are taken into consideration, including body, mind, spirit, and community.
- ▶ Providers use all healing sciences to facilitate the body's innate healing response.

Integrative medicine is based on sound science. It is inquiry-driven and open to new paradigms.

What I heard from the medical experts at the conference was that many of the drugs could be eliminated or significantly reduced with this approach. Some of the primary roots of many of the conditions discussed were "inflammatory" in nature. The power of mindfulness on almost every condition considered is something we all should pay attention to – and has little if any cost.

One of the most exciting sessions from Dr. Ronald Siegel of Harvard was called "Mindfulness & Aggressive Rehab for Chronic Pain." He told us of his serious back pain and how a combination of exercise and mindfulness ended his pain after first trying months of bed rest. He described a study of several hundred people from the general population selected to have

About our Founder



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management (now

called aging life care) since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989, which now employs over 200 caring people. Eldercare Services has been providing Bay Area families with care management, home care services (caregiving), advocacy, counseling, support groups and education for 30 years.

MONTHLY AFFIRMATION

"I trust my curiosity and explore options before making decisions."

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MRI's of their back. They found that 2/3 of these individuals had herniated discs or other negative results, but only those who reported that they didn't like their jobs complained of pain. His point is that those with pain might need to receive cognitive-behavioral therapy, resume normal activity and work with their negative emotions. Fear exacerbates pain and pain is everywhere. Suffering he said is optional. You can find Dr. Siegel's lecture on "The Science of Mindfulness" at Google.

Dr. Andrew Weil spoke about mental health and the overuse of medications to treat depression and anxiety. He stated that we have more depression now than during World War II and the Great Depression. He pointed out that studies using placebos and the SSRI's (anti-depression) medication for depression showed no real change with medications alone and that what is needed is a bio-social-spiritual model to treat these mental health conditions.

Dr. Weil says that today's population is not connected to nature, depends on diets of processed foods, have less social connections (which are protective), and have increased dependence on technology which increases anxiety. To address these mental health conditions, we need to look at the whole person. He also talked about the protective value of including omega fatty acids and Vitamin D in the diet.

Dr. Weil suggests that if drugs are used, it should be short term use only. To reduce stress and help with relaxation, individuals need to increase physical exercise, seek behavioral/cognitive therapy, and learn relaxation exercises like his breathing technique. His technique is included in many of our offered classes.

The final lecture of the conference was Dr. Dale Bredesen and his "First Effective Treatment for Alzheimer's and MCI." His research and approaches are not conventional and somewhat controversial. However, they are based on science and look at the APOE4 gene and the lifestyle changes necessary to delay or reverse cognitive decline. If you are interested in knowing more and wanting to follow his treatment, I encourage connecting with an Integrative Medical Provider sometimes also called a Functional Medicine specialist. Some of the changes he recommends are exercise with strength training, testing and treating sleep apnea, daily meditation, brain training activity classes and a diet of whole foods. He recommends a light Ketogenic diet. Again, do not start on these paths without medical guidance.

Another interesting session was "The How of Happiness: The Science of Interventions Aimed at Increasing Well-Being" by Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky. Two big takeaways for me were both the importance and value of the "count your blessings" intervention. An easy exercise – just once a week write down what you are grateful for during the past week. Those in the trial that did this daily did not have the same results as those that did it weekly. It turns out they were happier! The other was the power of "random acts of kindness" for yourself or to others as a way to increase your immune system as well as to add to your sense of happiness.

If you or a family member is not responding to interventions, a second opinion is helpful. I often suggest University Hospitals for those second opinions.

UCSF – Osher Center for Integrative Medicine – (415) 353-7700
Stanford Integrative Medical Center – (650) 498-5566
UC Davis Integrative Medicine – (916) 734-4754

Being well and staying well is about you and your total environment. Your spiritual life and your relationships can be as important as your blood pressure. Thrive!

Upcoming Events

Dementia: The Roadmap from Diagnosis to Family Care

 May 15th  5:30pm – 7:00pm

Join Linda Fodrini-Johnson as she discusses what you need to know, what you need to plan, and what you and your family can do when faced with the challenges of dementia.

- ▶ What is dementia? Where is it diagnosed?
- ▶ Understanding the progression
- ▶ What does a family need to do to prepare for the journey?
- ▶ Protecting dignity and reducing stress in all family members

Advanced registration required. No fee.
Class intended for family caregivers or those dealing with the challenges of aging. <https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-1/>

Navigating Life Transitions with a Care Manager

 May 17th  2:00pm – 3:30pm

Presented by: Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, Founder, Eldercare Services

We are celebrating National Aging Life Care Managers Month! Are you overwhelmed by life transitions? In this program, we'll answer these questions:

- ▶ How can you remain in control with a new diagnosis?
- ▶ How do you have the life you've envisioned as things change along your aging journey?
- ▶ What experts do you need in your back pocket to handle the unexpected "what-ifs?"

Advanced registration required. No fee.
<https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-6/>

Dementia: Understanding Behaviors and Finding Solutions

 May 29th  5:30pm – 7:00pm

- ▶ Tools on how to have conversations about needs when denial is present
- ▶ Giving you permission to "stretch the truth" for dignity, safety, and self-esteem
- ▶ Understanding the different types of dementia
- ▶ Understanding why the right diagnosis is important

Advanced registration required. No fee.
<https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-0/>

Location of Events:

Eldercare Services, 1808 Tice Valley Blvd.,
Walnut Creek, CA 94595