

The Wellness Revolution Has Arrived: Are You Ready?

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There is a wave of wellness awareness sweeping across America today as people lay claim to their own health and well-being. Gone are the days when patients humbly went to a doctor and trusted that their physician had all of the answers.

People are sick and tired of being ill. Studies have shown that the average 65-year-old is prescribed more than 32 prescriptions every year. But patients aren't getting better; despite the massive amounts of drugs being ingested, overall health seems not to be improving with traditional medicine alone.

Chiropractic, naturopathic and osteopathic schools are now jumping on board with integrative medicine, as are 46 of the top teaching medical schools. We are now seeing a movement of traditionally trained providers embracing integrative (functional) medical practices. It is acknowledged by many that integrative medicine will become mainstream within the next five years.

Professional health care organizations and the public will be looking for practitioners who are knowledgeable about integrative medicine. Are you prepared for them to call?

Consumer-Driven Market

Health care is truly a consumer-driven market. However, you must know how to drive patients to your practice, educate them to become partners in their own care, and have them take financial responsibility for their care in order to be successful. Those who have made the move to incorporate integrative medicine into their practices have seen tremendous positive impact both on patients and on themselves.

Tools Matter

Those who wish to be on the cutting edge of the future of health care must learn to incorporate evidenced-based integrative medicine into their practices. This requires one simple element: the right tools. The difference between a general practitioner and a specialist comes down to two things: education and tools. Specialists receive more specific education in a particular branch of healing than do general practitioners. And they use tools that give them an edge.

A tool must have five attributes to be appropriate to your practice. It must be inexpensive, safe, effective, have easily reproducible results (achieve similar results every time), and achieve results easy to explain to the patient.

Many doctors already use a significant number of tools in their practice. Specialized blood tests, saliva tests, urine tests, and an in-depth patient history can determine what ails a patient beyond the traditional blood analysis.

With traditional tests, "normal" is based on a bell-shaped curve of answers from patients who thought they were feeling well. But "normal" is not always optimal.

In integrative medicine, treatment protocols are designed based on a patient's disparity from "optimal" health, not just based in falling within what is considered so-called "normal." Through the use of specialized testing, you can develop individualized treatment protocols based on each patient's deviation from optimal health.

Intake Questions

Communication is vital, from the intake forms to test outcome analysis and patient follow-up. With highly developed communication skills, you can become a successful medical detective, discovering each patient's unique situation that is preventing them from realizing optimal health.

With input from multiple angles, patient questionnaires, blood, saliva and urine tests, you can investigate the underlying problem that in many cases has gone undetected by traditional practitioners and methods. With that information, you can learn to successfully implement a treatment plan that addresses the underlying condition on a patient-specific basis and from a functional standpoint.

[pb]Develop an intake questionnaire that helps pinpoint information that will be of benefit to you in your diagnosis. For example:

- Have they lived on a farm? (This would determine exposure to insecticides, fungicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and other sources of poisons that live in fatty tissue and the liver.)
- Do they dry clean their clothes, and if so, who picks up the clothes?
- What is their history of use of antibiotics or exposure to radiation?
- How many amalgam fillings do they currently have (mercury exposure)?
- Compared to five years ago, what is their energy level, their libido level, their endurance level?
- What is their stress level
- Do they exercise?
- What is their diet?

All of these questions will help you form a history of use in functional medicine. Lifestyles make all the difference.

Of equal value is finding out their beliefs. Never argue with their beliefs. *Understand* their beliefs (whether religious or medical) and then work within those viewpoints.

Three Key Words

One of the best ways to acknowledge your patient is by using the statement: "You indicated that ____." In so doing, you let them know that you have listened to them and are taking into consideration what they said. This then lays the foundation to find a protocol to help them.

Use their history and lab tests to determine where the abnormalities are, where the problems lie and what is less than optimally functional.

Twenty years ago, "normal" cholesterol for an adult was 300. Today, we are told that "normal" is less than 200, and drug companies keep pushing drugs to bring the level even lower. If drug companies had their way, every man, woman and child would be on medication.

In integrative medicine, we don't simply treat for heart disease; we look for those elements that

lend themselves to heart disease and high blood pressure: whatever inflames the lining of the artery allowing plaque to be produced. Numerous tests can indicate the cause of arterial clogging.

Importance of Education

When you treat your patients, they must believe in your commitment, conviction and belief in the treatment that you offer them.

You needn't change a patient's mind about traditional medicine; offer a complementary treatment and approach that will benefit them more than traditional medicine can. Never tell a patient that what they are doing is incorrect, or that the general practitioner is doing something wrong. Rather, explain that with 100 trillion cells in their bodies, it is vital to understand the relationship between those cells and the 868 trillion chemical reactions per second that are going on within their bodies.

To obtain optimal function, these cells must be healthy on the inside and out. You try to achieve this optimal health through integrative medicine and by as natural means as possible.

The more that you educate your patients, the higher their rate of compliance will be. Any protocol is worthless without patient compliance.

Your reputation is a function of compliance. The more you believe in the efficacy of what you offer, the more likely your patients will respond, mentally and physically.