

FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE

A golden opportunity to boost your quality of life

By: [DR. Drew Johnson]

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." – Hamlet

Traditional Western medicine and its doctors are the finest in the world for dealing with acute care such as the diagnosis and treatment of trauma or short-duration illnesses in need of urgent care – for example, a traumatic car accident, appendicitis or a broken leg. For such harrowing situations, I want traditional medicine in my corner!

But to stave off chronic problems or diseases, to better control or even reverse disease states and debilitation and to train people in the art and science of wellness and self-healing, functional medicine is better suited for developing and maintaining a higher quality of life well into one's senior years.

Functional medicine is personally tailored medicine. It deals with primary prevention and underlying causes of chronic disease rather than simply removing or masking symptoms once they arise.

Functional medicine emphasizes true healing, treatment of the person rather than a disease and a partnership of joint responsibility between doctor and patient, with the patient carrying most of the load. It also embraces the most current science in diagnosing early abnormalities that eventually lead to chronic illness.

Functional medicine uses botanicals and other forms of nutritional supplementation rather than pharmaceutical agents that create high levels of stress damage. Under the influence of functional medicine, "old age" is not what it used to be, anti-aging is now a science and optimized living is the "new normal" for people of every age.

In light of these points, I view functional medicine as a complement to traditional medicine and not an alternative. Systems of health protection should work together where possible. One approach cannot serve all of "heaven and earth."

Chronic disease, as a rule, is slow to develop. Examples are diabetes, cardiovascular damage, hypertension, low thyroid, cancer, mental illness, autoimmune disorders like rheumatoid arthritis and back problems.

Long-term predictions for such chronic diseases keep rising because the physical, emotional and mental effects of stress are overwhelming us. This stress comes from poor diet, a toxic environment, drugs, accidents, nervous system impairments, emotional reactions to life, mental overload, lack of exercise and insufficient sleep. Even falling in love is stressful (eustress)!

Diabetes is quickly becoming an epidemic, so traditional medicine is planning to target high-risk individuals with ever-more dramatic drug interventions. Researchers, of course, hope to enhance quality of life, while Big Pharma hopes to enhance profits.

Yet, the physical, emotional, mental and economic side effects of drug interventions leave us with a sobering message – one having little to do with healing or quality of life. Isn't it time for a sanity check?

Functional medicine works to keep you from becoming a high-risk disease candidate in the first place. The rule is simple: Prevent disease states from developing now so there's nothing to treat later.

But if you already happen to be riding the risk rollercoaster (typical for people over 30), you can start reversing some or most of the acquired stress damage by enabling your body to heal itself. This is very different from suppressing disease signs or symptoms with drugs, as is done with statins or thyroid medications to make lab measurements look better.

Here's the catch. People must qualify themselves to follow the prevention approaches of functional medicine and optimized living. Although a prevention or wellness lifestyle is highly rewarding, it is not for the timid. Such a lifestyle requires us to understand how the big five stress agents* mislead us and reduce our collective wellness.

The problem is that most people have fallen victim to the harmful mental pattern of hoping rather than (pro)acting. They hope they will somehow fare better than others who they know are suffering degraded lifestyles. Hope, however, doesn't have a good track record for preventing chronic disease. But hey, hope is easy!

So, what are some of the harmful mental patterns you may inadvertently hold because of big five stress agent influences? Here are a few examples. Do any fit you?

- You'll pop a pill as a quick fix for almost anything to improve your short-term quality of life.
- You think your doctor's job is to take charge of your health and "fix" you when symptoms arise.
- Your physical activity has decreased with each passing year because you think you're supposed to slow down as your calendar age rises.
- You want your body to act and recover as it did in your teens and 20s. Hint: It can't and won't without ongoing lifestyle adjustments.

Please consider this: Most cancers incubate 10 years or more before they are finally detectable. An even longer incubation period applies to the metabolic abnormalities that lead to diabetes. What environmental stresses and biological imbalances occur during those incubation years to serve as such fertile ground for cancer and diabetes?

It's the job of functional medicine to answer such questions and provide tailored rebalancing programs for individuals before they find themselves

needing drugs, surgery or medical appliances.

Drew Johnson, D.C., DM(P), is a functional medicine practitioner, clinician educator, wellness mentor, prolific speaker. His prevention practice includes anti-aging, nutrition, hormone balancing, permanent weight control, wellness chiropractic and fitness as it applies to health and appearance rejuvenation. He is also president and clinical director of his Johnson Performance & Wellness Center, located at 1103 E. University Dr. Suite 100 College Station, Texas 77840. For more information, call 979-268-1162, or visit www.dr DrewJohnson.com.

