

The Silent Fire Within

By Wellness Alternatives

Cardiovascular Disease is a disease of inflammation. Instead of National Heart Month this should actually be Inflammation Awareness Month! Treating the immune system is crucial for diagnosing and treating many cardiovascular diseases and related symptoms. This integrative approach looks beyond the symptoms to diagnose and treat the immune system before there is an inflammatory chain reaction. Functional Medicine seeks the root problem and provides natural treatment options. Inflammation can be fixed.

Are you looking for a new approach? Two local Functional Medicine physicians present case studies with heart related symptoms caused by inflammation and immune conditions.

CASE 1: Heart Palpitations, Thyroid Disease & Food Sensitivities

Amy: 32-year-old female with heart palpitations since the age of 23. The palpitations and shortness of breath seemed worse after the birth of her first child. "It usually happens right after eating, but sometimes occurs in the middle of the night. I get light headed and dizzy. It's a weird feeling! I usually make my hubby put his hand on my chest to see if he feels it too, and most of the times he does. This is very scary! It seems like there is a pattern of problems when I eat wheat and some other foods. I don't smoke, I don't have heart disease and I exercise a few times a week. My BMI is 21. I've been to several doctors and it's difficult to find someone who wants to help." Amy takes Lexapro and Propranolol to help, but her heart palpitations and shortness of breath remain frequent.

Dr. David Peterson: "One of the primary symptoms of gluten sensitivity is heart palpitations. Gluten is a common instigator of symptoms ranging from minor to severe. Thyroid disease, issues with gluten and heart palpitations go hand in hand. Many patients with autoimmune diseases are misdiagnosed."



Results: Diagnostic testing revealed Hashimoto's disease and gluten intolerance. A comprehensive treatment plan was designed for her, including supplements to decrease the inflammation and calm her immune system. She has been gluten free for about a month and over time the palpitations have lessened. As Amy supports her immune system and eliminates gluten from her lifestyle, palpitations will no longer be a problem.

Suggested reading: "Why Do I Still Have Thyroid Symptoms? When My Lab Tests are Normal". Finding and navigating healthcare can be confusing. Many patients with autoimmune diseases are misdiagnosed or have missed diagnoses. This book is an excellent resource.

Dr. David Peterson, DC, DCCN is a Diplomat in the College of Clinical Nutrition and the Missouri State Clinical Director for Direct Labs. He practices integrative chiropractic healthcare with an emphasis on Functional Medicine. He has specialized in thyroid, autoimmune conditions and gastrointestinal dysfunction for 15 years. Dr. Peterson's practice, Wellness Alternatives, is in Town and Country, Missouri. If you have questions about autoimmune or thyroid conditions, you may contact Dr. Peterson at dpeterson@stlwa.com or his office at 636-227-4949.

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CASE 2: High Cholesterol, Acid Reflux & Elevated CRP

Deborah: 65 year old female with acid reflux, high blood pressure, cholesterol over 250 and elevated CRP (C-Reactive Protein). She was prescribed statin medications which resulted in two trips to the ER with memory loss and muscle destruction. Frustrated and afraid, Deborah realized the western medical model could not provide cholesterol management due to the serious side effects of drugs. The statin's side effects were destroying her brain and muscle tissue, despite her cholesterol "looking great"!

Dr. Emily Hecker: "Cholesterol is NOT bad, we need it in our cell walls to create hormones and transport destructive chemicals out of the body. However, if your cholesterol is too high or too low, don't ignore it. Deborah's case is an example of healthcare providers not connecting the symptoms. Acid reflux and high cholesterol ignored as signs and symptoms of chronic inflammation. Inflammation is disease. Finding the root cause of inflammation means stopping the illness."

Results: High cholesterol, high blood pressure and arteriosclerosis can be a direct result of a compromised gastrointestinal tract. H. Pylori, a common cause of acid reflux, triggers chronic gastrointestinal inflammation, which is also measured with an elevated CRP. Deborah didn't realize that acid reflux was a direct connection to her high cholesterol. After diagnostic testing, we corrected the gastrointestinal terrain by eradicating the infection, decreasing inflammation, and rebuilding the gut environment. Deborah's blood work was optimal & she had never felt better.

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