

# Physician emphasizes holistic health



**D**oes your doctor tell you to exercise and eat right? Most docs do, but this one walks her talk big time.

Lisa Lilienfield, MD, is an accomplished athlete who has won numerous awards for power-lifting and previously held the Maryland State Women's Master Level record for dead lift. She is also a certified spin-cycling and yoga instructor.

In addition to those personal accomplishments she was chosen by Washingtonian magazine as one of the best physicians in the Washington, D.C. area. Her board certification is in family medicine but she is also a licensed acupuncturist and osteopath as well as a professor at Georgetown University School of Medicine's Department of Community & Family Medicine.

Dr. Lilienfield practices at the Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine in McLean, Va. The motto on their website defines the perspective of the practice: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This quote, taken from the constitution of the World Health Organization, is Dr. Lilienfield's focus also.

The Kaplan Center specializes in hard-to-diagnose problems. They

deal with complex medical cases - unraveling symptoms and signs, but most of all, understanding the whole person. Holistic health is emphasized; including the role of nutrition, physical exercise, sleep, hormonal balance and the mind-body connection.

"We look at the patient's family history, medical history, medications taken, lifestyle, vitamin deficiencies, sleep problems, adrenal and other endocrine problems. We do a thorough workup, then develop a plan. Sometimes a change in diet or sleep is all that is needed. The body wants to heal itself - you can help it to resolve problems," Dr. Lilienfield said.

Many patients she sees have underlying nutritional deficiency. A typical example of a patient might be one who comes in concerned about chronic back pain. They may be taking anti-inflammatory medications. But the real cause may just be a lack of magnesium. When that deficiency exists, that person may exhibit all kinds of muscle pain and problems. The anti-inflammatory medications can cause gastritis and bleeding, which results in the patient receiving yet another medication. The patient winds up with a complex set of symptoms from a simple underlying problem.

Another body system to be considered is digestion. Antibiotics can destroy the good, healthy bacteria that allow bad bacteria to overtake the intestines and result in acid reflux, diarrhea, or constipation. Food sensitivities, such as gluten intolerance, are often seen in combination with thyroid dysfunction. Food sensitivities can also create additional difficulties involving the intestines and bowel. You can develop irritable bowel syndrome and if you are not absorbing enough good stuff, immune system problems can result.

Quality of sleep can also affect the functioning of the body. Dr. Lil-

ienfield points out that if a patient has sleep apnea, the body may not be able to recover from stress and that weakens the function of the adrenals. The patient becomes exhausted. If no stage-four sleep is obtained, then fibromyalgia can develop. With sleep apnea, if the person is not getting enough oxygen at night, the functioning of all the glands is affected. Sleep apnea may lead to even more serious conditions, like heart disease or stroke.

A difficult-to-diagnose case was that of a woman from the Richmond area. She exhibited signs of thyroid malfunction but registered as borderline on standard tests. She was taking medication for low thyroid function but was not responding. She was fatigued to the point that she had to stop working. She had been to multiple doctors, was losing her strength and vitality and knew something was wrong. Dr. Lilienfield took a closer look and found that adding the hormone triiodothyronine (T3) to her medications allowed her body to utilize the hormone thyroxine (T4) she was already taking. The woman regained her health and is back full time in her job.

"I can't tell you how many of my patients have responded to a mere change in the combination of thyroid medications," Dr. Lilienfield said.

This holistic perspective epitomizes Dr. Lilienfield's perspective of medicine.

"My emphasis is to help my patients find a balance in life - in mind, body and spirit," she said. **FP**

*The purpose of Doctors' Choice is to present profiles of exceptional physicians, particularly in the Southeast, who have achieved excellence in one area of medicine. The skill, insight and technique of these specialists set them apart from others in their field. Diane York, MS, CRC, chooses physicians on the basis of the Castle Connelly section of U.S. doctors and her interviews with professional peers.*

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