

PRE-RELEASE

*A must-read book by a caring,
compassionate physician dedicated
to the service of his patients."*

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WHY YOU ARE STILL SICK

How infections can break your immune system
& How you can recover

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— PREVIEW CHAPTER —

PART I

**DO YOU HAVE
AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE?**

CHAPTER 1

MISSED INFECTIONS

Autoimmune disease creeps up on you. It starts with the aches and pains. At first you dismiss them with a shrug. You tell yourself you had a hard day. You shouldn't have lifted that big box. You're not getting any younger. But the time between new aches and pains keeps getting shorter. Your ability to bounce back starts to wane. You catch the flu and it takes weeks instead of days to recover. Before you know it, something's always tweaked or hurting. It's harder to do things you used to do with ease. You keep adapting, trying to adjust, accommodating each new pain and limitation, until one day you hardly recognize yourself.

Whether you notice it or not, your life is getting smaller. You don't have the interest or the energy to pursue the things you used to enjoy. Things you used to take in stride now keep you up at night, feeling anxious. Low-grade depression hovers over you like a cloud.

What's worse is, the pills aren't helping. You've gone to the doctor and gotten medication for anxiety or depression. It helped at first, but then, as if it you'd slid down a muddy embankment, you found yourself right back where you started. Nothing you do seems to work for long. Antacids

aren't improving your digestion. Sleeping pills can't keep you asleep. So you stare at the ceiling in the dark wondering what's gone wrong.

One day soon a new symptom will introduce itself. Maybe you haven't reached this moment yet, but if things keep going as they are, you will. Sometimes it starts with a sharp inexplicable pain in your hip or a migraine like you've never had before. Whether your doctor recognizes it or not, it's a tipping point. This is not just one more pain, it's a sign that things have gone too far. Your immune system is completely overloaded and your symptoms have started to cascade. You may look fine, but you are really very sick. You've crossed the line into *autoimmune disease*.

When immunologists use the word *immunity*, they are describing the immune system's appropriate response to a pathogen. Antibodies have been produced. Defensive cells have been released to fight off an attacker.ⁱ To have *autoimmunity* (literally, *immunity to one's self*) means that your immune system has turned that same immune response against you.

With an autoimmune disease, your immune system has gotten confused about what in your body is friend or foe. Instead of attacking bacterial invaders and infections, it attacks your own healthy tissue. This is nothing to take lightly. It is a failure of your body's fundamental defense system. It means something has gone badly wrong.

It's an urgent problem, but one that is still, unfortunately, very difficult to diagnose. Once your symptoms start cascading, multiple organs are affected. As soon as your doctor treats one set of symptoms, another will appear. Since the trouble is with the immune system, its dysfunction can affect any system in the body. Fix the hip pain, it can show up as a migraine. Fix your sleep and your digestion may get worse. The underlying problem is completely unaffected by tamping down the symptoms. So it looks like it's just moving around, but in fact, the real problem is never being treated at all.

As you can imagine, any conventional doctor will start to wonder what's going on, if they treat your headache and you say, "But now my back hurts!" Most doctors aren't taught that when symptoms move around, it may

well be a sign of systemic inflammation. It's far more common for them to see patients who suffer from anxiety about symptoms that they've read about online. So if someone keeps returning with new complaints, they're likely to assume it's psychological.

Autoimmune disease is a condition of pathological inflammation. Autoimmune disease does not always attack the nervous system, but when it does it produces symptoms that ebbs and flares like a forest fire. The intensity and location of each inflammatory outbreak varies. It doesn't produce "hard symptoms" that can be objectively observed, like a fractured bone or gallstone. It reveals itself through an ever-changing array of painful, often debilitating "soft symptoms:" fatigue, brain fog, general body pain, depression. As you'll see in the stories of my patients, there's nothing soft about the experience of these symptoms at all. They can worsen to a catastrophic degree, putting college students in wheelchairs and ruining the careers of fast-track professionals who had rarely been sick before.

Going to a doctor who misses the diagnoses can mean years of needless suffering. Although rheumatoid arthritis, the first autoimmune disease acknowledged by medical science, was recognized in 1950, and others have been discovered since, my clinical practice has convinced me that new autoimmune diseases, triggered by infections, that specifically target the nervous system have become epidemic in recent years.

Doctors with other specialties tend to be completely unaware of this possibility. Those who don't dismiss their patients' complaints entirely make the mistake of suppressing one symptom after another with drugs, only to see the underlying inflammation flare out of control. They're completely mystified about what's going on. So many of my patients have endured frustrated doctors who blatantly doubt their symptoms and even accuse them of exaggerating.

At best they have found a doctor who arbitrarily decided that one symptom was the problem. One symptom is never the problem with autoimmune disease. The underlying inflammation is the problem and it can go anywhere in the body it pleases, laying one symptom on top of the next.

Each layer must be resolved in turn until the inflammation stops cropping up somewhere else. But if you stop when the symptoms subside, it's like walking away from that forest fire when the trees have stopped burning but there are still smoldering embers in the grove. The fire isn't out. It will flare up again.

In a situation like this, it's easy to understand why so many people show up at my office feeling discouraged and wondering if there's any hope. After years of tests and treatments, they have thought that it was over time and again. Their blood tests were normal. Their scans were fine. Everything seemed to be normal, then the slightest change brought the fires of inflammation roaring back. It didn't take much to set it off. It was only a surprise because nobody was watching the embers.

In my office, we always check for the embers of inflammation lingering in the brain, confusing the immune system until it starts attacking its own body. We specialize in interpreting the symptoms in the context of the whole person and getting to the cause of the problem. It's essential to not only eliminate each of the pre-existing condition that have made your body more vulnerable to getting an autoimmune disease from an infection, but also to actively treat the immune system itself so it can function normally again.

Our patients often come to us exasperated that so few of the experts they have sought out--for many years and often at great expense--are able to understand the true nature of their condition and return them to good health.

To make matters worse, most doctors don't realize that there is an entirely new set of autoimmune diseases emerging that are triggered by infections. As a result, they treat only a few of the symptoms and never trace it back to the source: the infection. They also don't realize the importance of addressing the factors that weakened your immune system and are setting the body up to go haywire and start attacking itself: sleep deficit, gut imbalance, toxic overload and lingering emotional traumas.

Many patients have been told they have chronic fatigue syndrome or fibromyalgia, as if that explained everything. But it doesn't. Because they

also have trouble with their memory and ability to concentrate. How does chronic fatigue explain the fact that they used to be doing demanding jobs or excelling in graduate school and now they have to read a paragraph ten times to understand it? How does it explain the fact that they used to be in vigorous good health and suddenly everything changed?

Now they're mired in a low-grade to severely disabling yuck. They feel crappy all the time. By night, they sleep poorly. By day, they take more and more pills for more and more inexplicable aches or pains every week. Their lab tests come out normal, but things keep getting worse. They're rightfully worried. Yet their doctor can't imagine what the problem is, so she has exactly the wrong response: "But you look great!"

Life has gotten smaller fairly abruptly in just the last few years. They see they're going down the wrong road, but don't know the way back.

In my practice, we know the way. We accompany people back to good health all the time. Because not everyone can come to my offices McLean, Virginia and work with my team, I'm writing this book to share as much as I possibly can about the process, so you can help yourself. As well-informed patient, you will be better able to know exactly what's happening and make the changes you need.

You will still need a doctor to order lab tests and sometimes prescribe certain medications. If you can find a good doctor who understands autoimmune disease and is willing to work with you as an informed patient, the road back to good health will benefit from having a medical advocate.

As much as we might all wish it would, the change won't happen over night, but you can begin your return to vibrant good health right away.

On our website, there is a short quiz called The Symptom Function 36 (SF-36) that serves as an objective check for the state of your physical and mental health. It can help you and your physician to understand how sick you are. You're welcome to go there now and get immediate feedback

as to whether your symptoms suggest an autoimmune condition:
www.kaplanclinic.com

AUTOIMMUNITY

There are more than 100 autoimmune diseases where the immune system attacks its own body.ⁱⁱ In American alone, autoimmunity impacts 1 in 20 adults.ⁱⁱⁱ With so many distracting symptoms, a diagnosis of "autoimmunity" can easily slip through the cracks.^{iv}

Yet the testing for some of them is unreliable, making them hard to diagnose with any certainty. Others are so rare that doctors don't think to test for them. Most are spread across a variety of specialties, so it's hard to find one doctor who puts the whole picture together. Even though inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, lupus, Hashimoto's and Graves' are all major autoimmune diseases, they are usually listed separately as completely different, unrelated conditions.^v

When the major autoimmune diseases are counted together, there up to 50 million cases of autoimmunity--as many as cancer and heart disease combined.^{vi}

What's more, there are signs that we are on the brink of a dramatic increase in autoimmunity. According to a study published by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on April 7, 2020, there has been a 50 percent increase in the most common biomarker of autoimmunity (antinuclear antibodies (ANA) in the last 25 years.^{vii}

INFECTION TRIGGERS AUTOIMMUNITY

This new set of autoimmune diseases triggered by infections complicates things. Because the research is just emerging, doctors who are accustomed to looking for the conventional markers for autoimmune diseases don't always make the connection to infections.

Environmental triggers, particularly bacteria, viruses, and other infectious pathogens play a major role in the development of autoimmune diseases. They can initiate or exacerbate autoimmunity.^{viii}

One study showed that identical twins only developed autoimmunity when they had both a genetic proclivity and an environmental trigger (such as an infection).^{ix}

Some researchers speculate that the body attacks normal cells because the antibodies produced in response to infections resemble viruses and bacteria. Others think that the infections themselves damage the immune system.^x

The virus that causes mumps and measles have been linked to Type 1 diabetes.^{xi} Multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis (suspected caused by herpes and candida)^{xii}, lupus and Guillain-Barre syndrome can all be provoked by Epstein-Barr. But since the infections often occur long before the symptoms of autoimmunity appear, few doctors make the connection.^{xiii}

Ideally, thoroughly eliminating the infection would put an end to autoimmunity, once it has developed. That would be the most compelling proof. Acute arthritis, for example, is often alleviated by successfully treating Lyme disease.

In my practice we have seen dramatic improvements in the lives of my patients once the infection is completely gone:

Masha, an athlete, and mother of three had Lyme and multiple viral infections. She was disabled by IBS, heart palpitations, chronic fatigue, joint pain, numbness and other irritating nerve symptoms that would come and go. She is back running marathons and recently became a mother of four.

Ellen came to see me in her 20's. Shortly after graduating from college she began suffering with headaches and joint pain. Within two years she developed severe stomach pains and diarrhea. Her weight dropped from a healthy 128 pounds to a life threatening 85 pounds. Ellen had Crohn's disease. The probable cause was infection, mycobacterium avium.^{xiv} After treating the root infection, then each of the issues that had set her up for autoimmune disease, we then took active steps to calm her immune system. Today Ellen's

symptoms are completely gone. She has fallen in love, married, and had a gorgeous baby boy.

Chris, a general contractor, developed a severe gastrointestinal infection while traveling overseas. When he began to experience increasing muscle weakness in his legs, he was diagnosed with Guillian Barre syndrome, an autoimmune disease that causes paralysis. It begins in the legs, but can ultimately paralyze the entire body. The bacteria that had cause both his gastrointestinal infection and triggered the autoimmune disease, Guillian Barre, was campylobacter jejune.^{xv} Once the infection was treated Chris steadily recovered his strength. He now owns his own company and manages major construction projects.

Unfortunately, it is often more complicated. Pathogens can continue to cause a disease even after the original infection has been completely eliminated.^{xvi} And sometimes a single infection can trigger several different autoimmune diseases.^{xvii}

IMPACT

The average person with autoimmunity sees five doctors over three-and-a-half-years before they receive an accurate diagnosis.^{xviii}

Along the way they may have been diagnosed with conditions like chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), fibromyalgia, post-treatment Lyme syndrome, chronic depression, irritable bowel syndrome, or even obsessive compulsive disorder. The problem with these very real diagnoses is that they are the end of the exploration of why you are sick when they should be beginning.

Many of my patients have described the relief they experienced when someone finally identified the problem. A diagnostic label from a medical professional can feel like validation after months or years of uncertainty. It can feel great to know you're not imagining things and being a hypochondriac. But it's far more important to find a doctor who sees the

big picture, understands the implications of your condition and knows how to resolve it.

People suffering from autoimmunity often experience extreme states of debilitation. It's not uncommon to be unable to work or go to school. This can derail financial security and interrupt the natural course of their lives.

Yet most of the time, they don't particularly look sick. So their own loved ones lose patience and wonder if they're malingering or just not trying hard enough. When a disease is virtually invisible, it is even harder to identify.^{xix}

The increasing tendency for doctors to specialize increases the challenge in finding a physician who can recognize what's going on with a disease that encompasses many specialties like autoimmunity.

Each one simply addresses their own specialty and, at best, refers patients to specialists for any other symptoms. But if that happens, who will see -- and treat -- the whole?

A psychiatrist may prescribe medications for the symptoms of depression, anxiety disorder, behavioral disorder or obsessive disorder. But it is the truly rare Psychiatrist who would connect a case of Epstein-Barr you had last year as the source of your depression, nor are they even aware, in most cases, that an infection could lie at the root of your symptoms.

As autoimmunity ramps up, the symptoms starts piling on top of one another like lemmings tumbling over a cliff into the sea. An assortment unique to each individual emerges, including fatigue, poor digestion, headaches, sleep, brain fog, pain, heart palpitations, inability to stand, blackouts and any other symptoms that can be caused by the inflammation of the brain that is creating them.

The inflammation itself is frequently set off by an infection, then compounded by trauma and toxins.

Depression, anxiety chronic fatigue and chronic pain and many other issues are the consequence of inflammation in the brain. The inflammation in the brain is the immune systems response to tissue damage

from infections, toxins and other assaults. These assaults include chronic stress and other emotional traumas.

It is essential then is to treat not just the illness--with its infections, physical traumas and toxins--but the whole body and the immune system itself.

The acquired immune system is our specialized defense force. It is the force that builds antibodies to not only fight specific illnesses but it remembers the attackers and keep us safe from being invaded again by the same armies of germs. It is also the force that when sick and traumatized can get very confused and begin to attack us. A condition called autoimmunity, self against self.

Although it is acknowledged that there is an “autoimmune epidemic,” most doctors focus on conventional autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis, type 1 diabetes mellitus, Guillian-Barre syndrome, psoriasis and others, while the number of people suffering from new autoimmune diseases is growing by the day.

Approximately 10% of Americans may be suffering with undiagnosed autoimmunity. The revolution coming in medicine is that damage to our autoimmune system is far more common and indeed the underlying problem in a huge number of conditions as varied as PANS/PANDAS, depression, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, POTS, Multiple Sclerosis and many more. Autoimmunity caused from physical or emotional trauma, toxins or infections or a combination of these assaults may be the most important insight into chronic disease of the 21st century.

Damage to our cells powerhouses the mitochondria are also a part of this problem causing chronic illness and impairment of our immune systems. This concept of mitochondrial damage championed by Dr. Robert Naviaux which he calls the “Cell danger response” is rapidly being recognized as another crucial element to total recovery.^{xx}

To heal, you must identify and treat all of the issues that have caused your immune system to become sick but failure to also treat your immune system results in failure for you to totally recover and worse yet leaves you primed for the next assault that can send you cascading down into permanent disability.

THE SET UP

Your immune system is devoted to protecting you from infections. The only reason it will not do that is if something else is impairing its ability to function.

The top four reason for this impairment are: unhealthy sleep, abused gut, environmental toxins and emotional trauma. When your immune system has been undermined by these conditions, your body is set up for trouble. Once you get an infection, your odds of developing autoimmune disease have greatly increased

SET UP + INFECTION = AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE

SOLUTION

All of these issues are neuroinflammatory. What started out as an infection can quickly become a serious immune challenge. In order to recover, you will need to find the infections, then find and treat each of the other issues that set you up: First the toxins, then the gut, then the trauma, then the sleep. As we tick these things off one at a time, we then treat the immune system itself, to calm it down and return it to its optimal state. Only then will you be free from autoimmune disease.

1. Find the infections.
2. Eliminate the infections.
3. Treat the toxins, gut, trauma and sleep issues
4. Calm the immune system

In this book, I will give you a comprehensive method for healing, a new way of thinking about and approaching the problem, then tools that

will allow you to figure out whether you have these issues and, if you do, will show you how to fix them.

You're going to have to take charge, because most physicians don't think like this. We're are too siloed into specialties in the medical field today. If you go to the Orthopedist who specializes in shoulder pain and if you're pain is in the 5th digit of your right hand, you're in the wrong doctor's office. You'll have to go to a 5th digit specialist. In the chapters that follow, you will be given the tools you need to become your own best advocate for your health.

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