



**MY PHILOSOPHY OF CARE
BY DR. ELINA CHERNYAK, D.O.**

The foundation of my practice as a Doctor of Integrative Medicine is to connect with my clients in a personal way, treat them as real people, as individuals, and help them unleash the natural qualities within their bodies to live an enjoyable, healthy and active lifestyle. I work with anyone who may be dealing with either chronic or sudden conditions, a complex disease, or who wants to simply improve just about any aspect of his or her health, function or performance.

I believe that 'Alternative Medicine' should really be called 'Conventional Medicine', where lifestyle, environment and nutrition play central roles in healing the whole person. I am passionate about solving seemingly complex health issues, especially for those who have been looking fervently for answers. I provide a new, refreshing kind of medical care, akin to the concept of a modern country doctor where my clients are given ample time to be known not just as a case, but as a whole person, and where they can come to me for just about any problem.

I administer natural, nutrition-based treatments as often as possible. But I also know when it's appropriate to prescribe the right pharmaceutical, test or procedure offered by traditional medicine. It's important in my opinion for your physician to have as many tools in their toolbox as possible, and to know what to use and when to use it.

The body you are in today is the one you'll live with all your years. The quality of your health dictates the quality of your life. Health and vitality allows you to participate in life, not just tolerate it. But if we do fall ill, it's exciting to know that we can now identify, treat and prevent many diseases and conditions with elegant and effective natural methods that resonate with our body on a biological level. What I offer goes farther than most common alternative methods, combining evidence-based, scientific medicine with the wisdom of Nature and the sciences of microbiology, physiology and biochemistry. When professionally administered, we can solve many health issues safely, naturally and more intelligently.

I grew up in Soviet Russia, during a time where the communist regime caused many hardships in the lives of people. I spent many of my formative years in a remote village in Ukraine where locals treated each other with folk remedies passed down from generation-to-generation. I worked with local healers and grew up with the philosophy of preventive medicine. Those childhood experiences encouraged me to pursue a career in Integrative Medicine.

As a physician who has received traditional medical training, I know when you have an emergency or require further work-up and treatment in the medical establishment, and when you don't. My experience has allowed me to include my services of consulting people who are really serious about their health and want to maintain it through nutrition, exercise and psychological/spiritual wellness. My approach will improve and maintain health, guide towards healthier living patterns and help you avoid future conditions and potentially toxic medications.

In the traditional medical arena, many people are frustrated with the status quo of care they receive from many doctors, where they feel rushed, may be passed from one specialist to another, and where the first question they are asked after "Hello" is "What kind of insurance do you have?" This pattern of impersonal, assembly-line care renders lukewarm results and an apathetic mentality in a profession that should require just the opposite.

There's a lot of confusion in the alternative healthcare world as well. People are looking for the truth, for more natural and safe ways to fix a chronic problem, or to improve their good health into extraordinary health.



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I find it frustrating that people often spend thousands of dollars and many months if not years on various unorganized, random alternative approaches where they just end up spinning their wheels. You need to know what is happening on a biochemical level in your own individual body and why the symptoms you are experiencing are often interrelated. Only then can you set out to resolve an issue quickly and effectively.

Alternatively, patients may endure the costs and potentially harmful side effects of pharmaceutical drugs when there can often be a more healthy solution afforded by targeted nutrients, osteopathic therapy, or any other 'alternative' solution. Advances in surgical procedures and in pharmaceutical medicine have provided us with many wonderful solutions for acute conditions, and thus I advocate the use of them in cases where alternative methods are not as effective.

I also strongly believe in the responsibility of any 'alternative' practitioner to know whether a patient needs traditional medical treatments, drugs or surgery. The dangers of administering an herb when the patient actually needs surgery are clear. However, also are the dangers of undergoing a surgical procedure for a problem that can be solved with more natural, non-invasive modalities that often have benefits on the person as a whole.

More recent findings in Functional Medicine show true promise for the future and are at the center of my own philosophy of care. In essence, instead of utilizing remedies or drugs designed for the masses, we can now identify individual biochemical markers that may lead to a particular condition, and either enhance or suppress their function to reach a desired outcome.

The underlying causes of disease can often be treated first and foremost through targeted nutritional pathways. In many ways, this is the future of medicine. The one-size-fits-all approach to the treatment of disease is slowly becoming obsolete. Our biochemical signatures are true, scientific indicators of our genetic predispositions to disease. We can now identify specific genes that may lead to a specific condition later in life, and administer specific nutritional supplementation that will prevent that gene from activating.

The key to success in my view is to analyze each person's history, where they are today, look at where they want to be, and customizing an integrative approach that is scientifically based on their individual genetic makeup and that will both compliment and enhance their lifestyle. It's not about focusing on just one symptom, or treating symptoms as separate issues, but rather focusing on one's entire system, treating the whole person and optimizing their natural function in a more global way.

Over the next several decades, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, Alzheimer's, MS and many other autoimmune neurodegenerative diseases will have an ever-increasing impact on our society emotionally, socially and financially. While at first glance unraveling the complex mechanisms involved in the pathogenesis of these seemingly discrete clinical entities may seem daunting, modern research clearly reveals that these unique clinical entities are simply variations on a theme. The same syndrome may arise from many different causes. With this understanding, meaningful functional interventions based upon high caliber scientific research are justified.

In medical school, I observed how Western medicine tends to cure diseases by dividing people by their organs - e.g., liver, kidneys, heart, etc. thus treating every organ separately. At the core of my beliefs is the importance of treating the whole person - concentrating on the root of the problem as opposed to solely addressing the symptoms.



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Integrative, or Functional Medicine is an approach to health that aims to deal with the patient as a whole and not merely with physical symptoms. It takes into account psychological, social and environmental factors of an individual, and the body's natural tendency towards equilibrium. When that equilibrium is disrupted, I work in partnership with the patient, focusing on aspects of his/her life to promote self-healing.

I have continually sought answers and gained a greater knowledge of medicine by following the work of clinicians and scientists around the world who spend their lives developing new intervention tools that assist in prevention and management of chronic degenerative diseases. As we have all heard, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Yet, many people, including many doctors, seem to ignore this simple truth.

Many great discoveries are vigorously opposed by existing dogmas. In 1630, Galileo Galilei struggled to prove his discovery of the world being round and not flat. And just as that, today, the leading philosophers and institutions have similar problems with the truth. Most of you had the experience at one point or another where your doctor recoiled when presented with your questions about nutrition and supplementation. This reaction, true to human nature, is nevertheless unscientific. It is embarrassing to doctors when patients know more about their case than they do. Yet there is no other rational choice. If therapy exists, and is reasonably well tested and safe, it is inexcusable to not try it. Doctors know this, but since many are so uneducated in nutrition, they are usually not in a position to supervise such therapy. Hence the embarrassment. It has been proven many times over that the safety of megavitamin therapy is far greater than drug therapy.

Traditional medicine evolved around the primary concept of finding and utilizing manufactured medicinal drugs to serve as "magic bullets", each specifically treating a given disease. The efforts to uncover such miracle drugs are at the forefronts of medicine today, and have in many ways, resulted in great medical achievements. However, this popular perspective has enriched the pharmaceutical industry to put forth numerous efforts to chase down a cure of each systemic disease. Traditional medicine is primarily and exclusively focused on disease states and its eradication. Those same concepts are being taught in medical schools; the subject of health only as it relates to a disease state. Practitioners who came up through the education system over the last 30 or 40 years received little or no nutrition education.

General conclusions made in traditional medicine regarding the best treatments for a disease is based on averages. This creates information (or misinformation) to the detriment of a given patient. Eventually, you can boil all data down to averages so you know everything about someone who does not exist. This is the statistically average person who is not representative of any real person. I believe that what works for one person may not work for another.

I believe we have an opportunity now to practice a new model of health care where the patient takes a more active role in their healing process, not just to "go see their doctor" for 12 minutes and get a prescription for some drug with potentially harmful side-effects, or to be passed around from one specialist to another in search of answers. Rather, much more can be accomplished with a more nurturing, interactive and holistic strategy to take care of one's health. I offer my clients strategies that are realistic, safe and sustainable.

I use a well-rounded, matrix approach using structural, nutritional and psychological / spiritual pathways (a combination of alternative and in some cases traditional methods to achieve optimum results for the unique individual). I follow a progression of steps to a successful outcome and a healthy pattern of living based on each person's unique physiology.



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An older model of health is when a patient's solution to a problem would be to 'go see their doctor'. I believe that it is only part of the solution. 'Just do what we tell you model' may not work for a lot of people anymore. A better route is to employ a doctor as a health consultant, utilizing a physician's knowledge of health and of their patient. The other part involves a proactive person who knows that they are in control and is willing to do the work involved in order to guide themselves back on their personal path of wellness.

In addition to my traditional medical training of understanding all current medications, procedures and diagnostic treatments, I employ osteopathic training which uses palpatory and manipulative skills to aid in diagnosis and treatment of patients with systemic disease or dysfunction. Osteopathic medicine is an additional skill, not taught in traditional medical schools, that allows me to provide both rapid and long-lasting benefit toward improving a patient's level of health.

Another primary, modern approach that I employ involves a detailed analysis of dietary components and the way they influence the expression of specific genes within an individual. I can utilize this cutting-edge genomic principle to clearly and accurately identify specific areas of concern, and thus also identify specific strategies for success.

Symptoms produced by a given disease may differ in different individuals and in the same individual at different times. This is due to a reflex nature of the nerve and chemical control of certain physiologic function. There is a strong interrelationship that exists between viscera and skeletal structures, which I address through an osteopathic perspective. Such individual information is obtained through physical exam and becomes part of diagnostic and therapeutic decisions for that patient.

Functional medicine approaches the body's system as one part of a web of interconnectedness of all bodily systems and functions and assesses how to optimize processes that permit healthy functioning of the whole organism. More emphasis in traditional medicine is placed on naming and managing than on prevention or optimization of function or risk assessment. At the core of traditional medical approach is recognition of a disease. However, in many circumstances, by the time these disorders have actually resulted in diagnosable conditions involving the nervous system, the damage is quite severe. The key of the success of functional medicine is that it reestablishes the delicate balance that permits healthy human functioning.

I believe in the importance of avoiding illness and to help people develop more self-efficacy. You must be the agent of change in your life. For those who do enjoy good health, this is the time to take charge of your life and protect your health, rather than waiting until you find yourself in a hospital bed. I firmly believe that the human being is not a weak entity, vulnerable to and afflicted by several incurable diseases. On the contrary, each person possesses certain qualities inherent through Nature that enable one to overcome any disease and that are strengthened largely through preventive measures.

Therein lies the foundation of my practice as a Doctor of Integrative Medicine - and my goal is to help my patients unleash the natural qualities within their bodies to overcome their disease and to live an enjoyable, healthy lifestyle.