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Finding your path to optimal wellness

By Natalie St-Denis

This is your third visit to your doctor's office in the last 6 weeks and after a series of blood tests your doctor tells you that everything is fine. You walk out momentarily relieved, but then are quickly reminded that your fatigue and daily aches and pains haven't been dealt with or explained. Your intuition tells you that there must be more to life than this daily suffering and that there has to be someone, out there, that can help you.

You're right and there is.

Calgary physician, Dr. Bruce Hoffman, is bridging the gap between traditional and alternative medicines and forging new ground within the medical community. His understanding and application of eastern and western philosophies has made him Canada's leading physician in the field of integrative medicine.

One of his main contributions to integrative health is his innovative approach to treating patients without the use of drugs. "I firmly believe that the world of health and wellness is miles apart from the world of drug managed disease care," says Dr. Hoffman. "They are two different disciplines that require an entirely different education."

Dr. Hoffman admits that his medical training did not prepare

him for the work that he does today and that our prevailing health care system doesn't come close to adequately addressing the complex health needs of Canadians. Dr. Hoffman has spent the last 15 years extensively studying and learning new concepts and therapies to assist patients achieve maximum health and wellness. "Drugs and surgery are woefully inadequate to assist in this transformation," he says.

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A medical practitioner for over 20 years, Dr. Hoffman started exploring alternative healing

techniques when he became increasingly frustrated in his attempts to diagnose and treat patients within an 8-minute consult and only with drugs and surgery at his disposal. In his quest to provide quality and effective therapies, he began to travel the world and study under the guidance of several world leaders of body-mind medicine and in spiritual healing, including Deepak Chopra, Osho, Ramesh Balsekar, John Demartini, Dietrich Klinghardt, Larry Dossey and Ken Wilber.

Further to keeping abreast of the latest scientific discoveries in medicine, Dr. Hoffman has gained certification in Ayurvedic medicine, Functional medicine, Traditional Chinese medicine, Primordial Sound Meditation, Neural and Prolotherapy as well as many other sub-disciplines.

He is continuously learning and keeping an open mind to new breakthroughs and integrating all of his knowledge and expertise when treating patients.

“You can’t divorce a person from their inner beliefs, their environmental exposures, or from their social and cultural influences. You just can’t heal a person if you treat them out of context and separate them from all the interconnected parts of their life,” says Dr. Hoffman.

The traditional western model of medicine treats the physical body as separate units and focuses on the ‘broken’ parts to which a ‘fix’ is applied. “The problem with that approach is that individuals often present a vast array of soft symptoms that can’t be linked to a disease process. Traditional allopathic medicine has very little to offer in these circumstances. Often exasperated by their desire to help, doctors end up prescribing antidepressants, which don’t address the source of the problem,” explains Dr. Hoffman. “When I last examined the issue, I came up with at least 25 possible interlocking causes for depression. It is definitely not a Prozac deficiency disease,” he says.

By unifying western and eastern philosophies, Dr. Hoffman is laying the foundation for a new medical paradigm. “The traditional model is limiting as it doesn’t address all of the causative factors that can lead to dis-

ease, such as dental issues, toxic homes, abysmal nutrition and high stress. And it certainly does not address the multitude of options that are available to assist a patient on the journey to health and wellness,” says Dr. Hoffman.

He goes on to explain that the prevailing medical paradigm may pay lip service to some of these issues but doesn’t have a suitable framework to truly address patients’ concerns. And since the model’s focus and emphasis addresses primarily the physical aspect of the disease, it does a poor job of actively engaging patients in their recovery.

Part of your healing process will involve a detailed look at the seven areas of your life.

You will have to define what each area means to you, how it should like and what steps and commitments you will take to achieve your goals.

- Spirituality
- Career
- Finances
- Education
- Social Activities
- Relationships
- Health

“Without the patient actively involved in the process, linking cause and effect and attempting to obtain a whole new set of eyes with which to perceive

their predicament, there is little hope of a true transformation in their health and wellness. By being actively involved, they activate the ‘healer within’ or the ‘inner physician’,” explains Dr. Hoffman.

Dr. Hoffman is not interested in challenging traditional medicine or asking it to change. “The incredible progress of modern medicine is one of the greatest miracles of the last 150 years. What I am suggesting is that we need to begin to separate these two different paradigms, disease managed care from that of health and wellness,” he says.

Dr. Hoffman’s desire is to have the healthcare community clearly delineate the differences between both paradigms so that a new medical curriculum can emerge – one that will cross-train healthcare workers to provide insight and care using both approaches. “I really become upset when traditional doctors derisively proclaim with authority on issues of health, wellness and transformation when their training did not prepare them ONE IOTA to comment on such issues,” says Dr. Hoffman. “This can be really confusing for the healthcare consumer, because people usually defer to health professionals on all issues of health,” he says.

With the vast amount of information now available on the World Wide Web, people are increasingly searching for answers and going beyond the lim-

its of traditional medicine. Dr. Hoffman has noticed that there is a whole new set of patients who are quite savvy about the complex questions regarding their health. In fact, many of Dr. Hoffman's patients end up in his office when everything else has failed.

In order to engage his patients in their healing process, Dr. Hoffman has created a roadmap to facilitate their learning process. He has developed *The 7 Steps to Health and Transformation*, a broad overview of specific diagnostic possibilities and therapies, to provide each patient with a personalized and restorative treatment plan to wellness. From the 'Extended Body' to the 'Spiritual Body' – the seven level model examines how our personal physical, electromagnetic, emotional, mental, familial and spiritual relationships are embedded within a larger environmental, social and cultural context. From environmental toxins finding their way into our system to our spiritual connection, or lack of, to the world – the seven steps to health and transformation takes every possible element into consideration.

On their first visit, new patients spend 20 minutes with Dr. Hoffman, during which time he assesses their concerns. "When I meet a patient, I see them as a whole person," he says. "I have to resonate with them, hear their stories and help facilitate the transformation they are requesting."

After the initial visit, patients are asked to fill out a lengthy questionnaire that can take up to 4 hours to complete. The questionnaire provides more clues and information about the patients' habits, relationships, beliefs, lifestyle, home and work environment, which in a further 1 hour interview are then linked to their symptoms and health concerns.

"All symptoms that we experience are feedback mechanisms of the body informing us that we need to start paying attention to specific areas of our life, be it our nutrition, stress in a relationship, financial worry or a myriad of other possibilities. It's a reflection of where we need to empower ourselves," says Dr. Hoffman. "The more we are disempowered in one area of life, the more chaos we're going to have in that area."

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Healing, he explains, is to fully realize the extent of what needs to be done to achieve specific outcomes and to awaken to that full potential. He says: "This only becomes possible when we expand our awareness beyond consensual reality, and with

education and discipline, implement the changes that are necessary to achieve a vibrant state of wellness."

As patients work through *The 7 Steps to Health and Transformation*, they are confronted with many of their unhealthy habits and beliefs. For example, the fourth and fifth levels of the model help patients understand that their trajectory in life may be run by unresolved emotional conflict, fear and guilt, which can lead to an internal dialogue of extreme low self worth. "This may have a direct contributory influence on their symptoms," says Dr. Hoffman.

For instance, one of his patients was suffering from menopause, with symptoms that included hot flashes, night sweats and fatigue. "A traditional doctor would have probably prescribed hormonal therapy. But an in depth consultation told me that she was under a lot of stress, had a poor diet and wasn't exercising. She was also deeply struggling with the fact that she didn't have a career and a real purpose in life," says Dr. Hoffman. "What I needed to do with this patient was to first address the imbalances in her life before considering bioidentical hormone replacement therapy."

The path to optimal wellness requires commitment and a lot of personal work. Dr. Hoffman makes it very clear to his patients that in order for them to feel better, they have to do their

homework. “I spend a lot of time educating my patients. The Centre offers a wide variety of workshops on principles of detoxification, nutrition, stress management, as well as how to manage their mind through meditation and other practices,” he says.

their spirituality, level of career satisfaction, mental development, financial health, inner health and outer beauty, social connections and relationships with loved ones. “Since our health can not be separated from how we are living our lives, I need to know the ease or stress

asked to seriously look at where they are and where they would like to be in each of the seven areas, and implement goals and commitment lists that assist them in becoming more conscious of what they really need to be doing to effect change.

The Seven Steps to Health and Transformation

Step 1. The Extended Body

Our body’s ability to function efficiently depends on the quality of the environment that we live and work in. A toxin-free environment including purified water, clean air, as well as organic whole foods is essential to the maintenance of our health.

Step 2. The Physical Body

Our physical body is a dynamic organism sustained through complex biochemical reactions and structural integrity. For homeostatic wellness, both of these crucial components need to be nurtured by optimizing biochemical pathways and treating musculoskeletal dysfunctions.

Step 3. The Electromagnetic Body

Our central and autonomic nervous systems regulate and maintain our body’s equilibrium and emit an electromagnetic field. This field can be significantly affected by increased stress levels and by surrounding manmade electromagnetic fields. Identifying and removing harmful sources of electromagnetic influence and managing stress are key to maintaining the body’s equilibrium.

Step 4. The Emotional Body

Our emotional reactions are strongly connected to the secretion of various neurotransmitters, which directly affect our body’s functions and activities. Unresolved emotional conflict can lead to stress and have devastating effects on our body’s underlying biochemistry.

Step 5. The Intellectual Body

Our belief systems and internal dialogues determine the way we perceive and interact with the world. Optimistic individuals tend to have positive health outcomes, while negative individuals with destructive internal dialogues are prone to disease and shorter life expectancy.

Step 6. The Soul Body

Further to our personal experience, we are part of a familial and collective archetypal identity, where our individual experiences merge with those of our ancestors and of the Collective. Underlying universal themes, such as romantic love, the hero’s journey, the pursuit of wisdom, hubris, loss and betrayal are common to all personal experiences. Understanding our ancestral identity and identifying with these reoccurring themes may free us from our own personal suffering.

Step 7. The Spiritual Body

The human spirit has the ability to sense an eternal quality beyond its physical state. Experiencing this eternal quality requires a shift in our awareness – from seeing ourselves as only a physical body with symptoms to a timeless and unbounded reservoir of pure potential.

In one of the workshops patients are asked to look at the seven areas of their life, which include

and challenges my patients are having in each of these areas,” says Dr. Hoffman. Patients are

Admittedly, it’s not easy to take time out for personal reflection

and start making important changes in our lives. We live in a society that readily looks for easy quick fixes whenever there's a problem; but the problem is that the quick fixes don't work, they merely act as temporary band-aids.

The path to optimal wellness takes work. The good news is that you don't have to do it alone. The minute you walk into The Hoffman Centre for Integrative Medicine, you are taking that first step and commitment to empowering your life. The Hoffman Centre has a team of dedicated healthcare

professionals who take part in your healing process. And with the help of cutting-edge medical equipment set in a pleasing and soothing atmosphere, you will receive a unique and tailored program to reach your health goals and consequently your overall goals.

The range of services available at The Hoffman Centre include detoxification and chelation therapy, functional medicine, vitamin and mineral IV therapy, nutrition and metabolic typing, bio-identical hormone replacement, neural and prolotherapy, stress reduction techniques, Ayurvedic lifestyle and nutrition, as well as emotional and spiritual counseling.

“My goal is to empower my patients and help them reach their full potential,” says Dr. Hoffman. “What I want people to realize is the power of their intentions. Intention can shift reality and this subtle force can have a profound transformative effect.”

