



THE MEDICINE IN INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

By Stephen P. Weiss, M.D., P.A.



Twenty-one years ago, shortly after I started my Private Practice in Integrative Medicine in Santa Fe, I was having lunch with Dr. David Canzone, DOM, discussing ways to get the word out about our respective practices. I had been emphasizing the many alternative therapies I offered in the advertising I had done up to that point. David turned to me and said “Stephen, what **sets you apart** from the pack as a practitioner of Alternative Therapies is that you have extensive training in Western Medicine and can offer conventional tests and treatments.” That was a defining moment for me, in more ways than one. David wasn’t telling me anything I didn’t already know; it was the distinction he made about the uniqueness of my Western Medical training that really hit home. That day I coined my trademark phrase, “Blending the Best of Western and Alternative Medicine.”

The one aspect of Western Medicine I use on a daily basis and most appreciate in my Integrative Medical Practice is the ability to make an accurate diagnosis. The proper diagnosis gives me invaluable information about the nature of your symptoms and your risk of suffering sometimes irreversible complications, or even dying if they are not adequately treated in a timely fashion. Sometimes I don’t have all the information during an office visit to make a precise diagnosis, but my 27 years of experience guides me with conviction to ensure that you receive the best care in a timely fashion.

A few years back, Janet, one of my longstanding patients, came into the office with a number of concerns. What struck me the most were not the symptoms she was telling me about, but her decreased level of alertness. She was able to tell me in great detail what was going on, but she was very drowsy, a noticeable change. Her neurological exam was abnormal — this 45 year old woman whom I had known for years was oriented to person (she knew her name), but not to place (she was unable to say where she was) or time (she gave me her date of birth when I asked her the date). I diagnosed an acute change of mental status, and sent her immediately to the Emergency room. (Sort of — see following testimonial.) Several days later I received this card from her:

You saved my life! When I came to your office for a last minute appointment, you knew that something was seriously wrong with me. You asked me many questions — questions others may not have asked. You knew I was mentally and physically regressing and needed to go to an emergency room immediately. You called the ER Doctor at a local hospital and informed him that you were sending me in to their ER. He told you that it was not an emergency situation and should be handled by my regular doctor outside of the ER.

*However, you persisted and called the ER at another local hospital. My potassium level was 1.2, the lowest they had **EVER** seen. I would have been dead in another hour if I had not gotten in and began treatment when I did. I was admitted into the hospital, and given potassium intravenously and orally for five days.*

I thank God that you persisted in getting me into the Emergency Room. Thank God you knew what questions to ask. Thank God someone called to cancel their appointment and your office staff called me instead of someone else. Thank God the ER doctors at the second hospital acted quickly. If any of these things had gone differently, I would not be here. You saved my life — I am so grateful to you. Thank you for knowing what to do and how to get things done.

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In April 2013, Nancy, a 19 year old, very pleasant young woman consulted me with severe insomnia (she was only sleeping 4-5 hours a night) Fibromyalgia, migraines, allergies, asthma, spina bifida occulta of C1, and IBS (mostly due to gluten intolerance) and fatigue of several years duration), all of which were leaving her anxious and depressed. On a scale of 0-10, 10 being the worst, her Fibromyalgia pain was averaging 7.5 and her energy was approximately 65% (100% being optimal). Nancy's passion is horses. She owns 4 of them and when she was healthier, she participated in competitive show jumping. "I haven't ridden a horse since last summer. It's a big loss. Every day I feel like I've run a marathon." She had completed one semester at UNM, but was taking time off due to her poor health. She had recently been evaluated and treated at the Mayo Clinic and though the steroids they gave her did stop the continuous migraine she had been experiencing, her visit did little to alter the other chronic symptoms she was suffering from. After a thorough exam, I ordered extensive blood work, referred her for a sleep study and to Dr. Francesca Russo, an Atlas Orthogonal Chiropractor who specializes in disorders of the Atlas (C1). I also had Nancy study the ingredients of all of her personal care products (makeup, body lotion,

etc..) for hidden sources of gluten and put her on Gluten Ease, an enzyme we sell at the office which she was to take at the beginning of any meal she had not prepared herself, that helps digest any gluten residues she was being exposed to through cross contamination. This was prescribed because she could not eat out without experiencing gas, bloating, diarrhea, and headaches even though she ordered gluten-free dishes.

The sleep study revealed Upper Airway Resistance Syndrome, which caused her oxygen levels to drop well below normal at night, and leg jerking, both of which interfere with restful sleep. Blood work revealed low ferritin (iron stores) which can cause leg jerks, below optimal vitamin B12, and very low Vitamin D, as well as the presence of H. pylori, via DNA testing of her stool. I gave her Vitamin D3, iron and B complex, Mastic Gum to treat H. pylori and referred her to Dr. Robert Supple, DDS for a dental appliance to treat her sleep disorder. Then I weaned her off Ropinirole, the drug her sleep doctor prescribed to boost dopamine levels and stop the leg jerks. She said it was helping a lot, but it can cause some nasty side effects including nausea, dizziness, hallucinations, hyper-sexuality, and compulsive gambling — none of which she was experiencing. I switched her to an all natural alternative,

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Stephen P. Weiss, M.D., P.A.
Clinical Assistant Professor
UNM School of Medicine

*"I can't ever remember feeling as well as I do now."
— S.D., Santa Fe*

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Balance D, which contains *Mucuna cochinchinensis* (an extract of the nutrient dense bean) and vitamins and minerals including L-5-methyl-tetrahydrofolate, the active form of Folic acid, all of which help to increase dopamine production in the brain. I last saw Nancy in January of this year and her health is completely transformed. She's sleeping 8 hours a night and waking refreshed. Energy is good, and she is exercising an hour at the gym daily. Her gut is fine — "I love Gluten Ease." No more IBS! Her Fibromyalgia pain has completely resolved! She is no longer anxious or depressed! Her Cymbalta (antidepressant) got packed away 1 month prior, and she hasn't needed it since. She went back to college and got all A's and one B! "I feel better than I have my entire life," she told me ecstatically.



Integrative Medicine. She is dedicated to treating the whole person, and skillfully addresses all aspects of an individual — physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. With 23 years' experience in the medical field, 13 of which were spent at Lovelace Family Practice/ABQ Health Partners seeing 25 patients a day, there isn't too much that Melissa hasn't seen or treated. And she does so with a kind and compassionate heart and a very strong intention to heal.

Melissa's other areas of focus are the safe and effective use of Bioidentical

Hormones in both women and men, and helping patients achieve ideal weight and body composition using state of the art equipment to assess fat and lean body mass — the InBody230. She has successfully treated thousands of patients with a broad array of medical conditions. What **sets Melissa apart** from many other practitioners who prescribe hormones is that she also provides women's health to her patients, including pelvic exams, pap smears and breast exams. Indeed, clinical practice is one of her true joys. Her reputation in Albuquerque is stellar. Melissa is an invaluable addition to our team. Those who are unable to wait 6-8 weeks to see me can be seen quickly by Melissa. Her presence means we can also better accommodate patients with more immediate needs. If you prefer a female provider, Melissa is your practitioner. Or if you just want to discover Melissa's unique style, perspective and expertise as a healer and integrative medicine specialist, please call our office at 505-872-2611 to schedule an appointment with her. We invite you to experience first-hand the qualitative difference of Holistic Integrative **MEDICINE** where we live and breathe the reality that (treatment of) the whole is greater than (treatment of) the sum of its parts.



Melissa Parra, CFNP, LLC

I'm delighted to announce that after an extensive two year search for an Integrative Nurse Practitioner, we've finally found her in our own backyard! As described in the first paragraph of this article, healthcare providers who combine Western Medicine with expertise in Complementary Therapies are few and far between. Melissa Parra, CFNP and I first met 20 years ago when both of us were students of Dr. Tieraona Low Dog. Melissa studied extensively with Dr. Low Dog, and worked in her clinic at the NM Herb Institute, which satisfied her passion for plants and their medicinal and therapeutic values. I moved back to New Mexico in 2000 to take over Dr. Low Dog's Treehouse Center for Integrative Medicine. Dr. Low Dog and I worked together as partners at the Center until she was appointed by then President Bill Clinton to the White House Commission of Complementary and Alternative Medicine. She's now the Director of Education at Dr. Andrew Weil's Integrative Medicine Fellowship program at the University of Arizona in Tucson, is Dr. Weil's personal physician, and has recently appeared on the Dr. Oz Show. Both of us benefitted tremendously from our affiliation with Dr. Low Dog and consider her one of our most important mentors.

As a member of the Navajo Nation, Melissa's Native American roots deeply inform her practice of Holistic

Dr. Stephen Weiss and Melissa Parra, CFNP have been successfully treating patients of all ages since 1993 and 2000 respectively. They have recently teamed up to provide outstanding Holistic Integrative care for the whole family. Patients deeply appreciate their genuine, heartfelt compassion and ability to seamlessly combine cutting-edge high tech medicine with numerous effective and safe alternative healing modalities. Please visit our website to learn a lot more: www.holisticmedicineheals.com