

Being in Love with Your Disease

By Alex Strand, Ph.D., Naturopath, 2001

One of the first questions I ask new patients is, “Are you in love with your disease?” Many patients tell me they are put off by this question. When I first started in the healthcare field I could never have imagined that some people might not want to get well. I now understand it is a problem particularly in people who have had chronic illnesses for longer than a few years.

Some people need their illnesses for a variety of reasons. It could be they get a lot of attention focused on their illness from loved ones or family members. It could be there are financial rewards such as disability insurance. Sometimes people are addicted to trying many different approaches to healing and it becomes their life. To “let go” of your illness can be a scary thing.

I once had a patient in such severe pain that she was forced into action. She could get no relief from allopathic medicine and had used a variety of pain relievers to no avail. She started my protocol and noticed a reduction in her symptoms within one week. She quickly told me not to get rid of her pain entirely, “just enough to be tolerable.” I did as she asked, but gently pointed out that she could eliminate her pain altogether.

She assured me that she did not want to get rid of her pain but wanted to have some quality of life. I have only received one request like this — she actually was very cognizant of the fact that she was in love with her disease but did not want to change her approach. She simply wanted to reduce the pain enough to be able to live. Many patients in love with their disease are not aware that they do not want to get well.

This may sound strange to people who are actively trying to eliminate their symptoms or those who have never been chronically sick. Most healthcare practitioners can identify with this phenomenon. Some patients are shocked at how quickly their symptoms disappear using therapeutic dosages of liquid herbs and decide to quit treatment when they are recovering nicely. This amazes me, but as a health-care practitioner I try to give the patient what they want.

One thing I cannot do is help those who are in love with their disease, which is why I always ask that question during the initial consultation. Although I can empathize with the process of falling in love with your illness, I cannot do anything for these patients.

Using therapeutic dosages of liquid herbal extracts and supplements doesn’t “treat” symptoms, it eliminates them. This approach is starting to gain recognition in the world, but most alternative practitioners in Australia have not been trained in this manner.

Many patients tell me how they have tried different alternative approaches, spent thousands of dollars, and still don't feel better. Either they read the dosages on a tincture or bottle of herb they have purchased and are taking a few drops of watered tincture or a few pills of powdered herbs three or four times a day or they have gone to a practitioner who may be well meaning but is not dispensing therapeutic dosages.

The quality of herb is important as well as the concentration and type of herb. I use quality herbs that are tested throughout the manufacturing process which means you have an active ingredient that is not contaminated. I also use an extract form, which is the strongest way to produce the herb. This means you are getting concentrated dosages of the herb. Dispensing proper dosages is critical to healing and getting results for the patient.

Regardless of the practitioner, new patients should be noticing a difference in their symptoms within 5-10 days. If you are not getting results, it is not the right approach. You should not be going to a practitioner week after week and not getting any results.

A Doctor Who Has Not Suffered from Chronic Illness May Not Understand

By Alex Strand, Ph.D., Naturopath, 2002

When Alex Strand fell sick fifth teen years ago, he thought he was going to die. A typical workaholic . . . running 100 miles an hour, 24 hours a day, he suddenly collapsed. It felt like a heavy flu, and he thought that within three to seven days it would be over. Instead, he got so ill that he could not get out of bed. Soon many new debilitating symptoms started to appear. They included constant sore throats, low-grade fever, total body aching day and night, lymph node swelling, headaches, depression, anxiety, mood swings, inability to concentrate, hot and cold flashes, sensitivity to noise, light and temperature, intestinal discomfort (reacting to most food consumed), sleep disturbance and extreme debilitating fatigue.

A variety of tests were taken which showed absolutely nothing but an antibody to a flu-like virus. He was subsequently diagnosed with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), Mononucleosis, yuppie flu, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibro-0myalgia, Glandular Fever plus a number of other name tags. He was offered drugs, vitamins, natural remedies, treatments . . . you name it.

He started to recover only when he consulted with another naturopathic doctor, one of his mentors at the Australian College of Natural Medicine, who used to suffer

from chronic fatigue and Fibromyalgia. As he recovered, he became fascinated with this condition. Many health-care practitioners had claimed to be able to bring about recovery, whereas, in fact, people got showered with irrelevant tests and treatments.

As he recovered, he became more interested in patients that suffered from CFS and Fibromyalgia. People say that very often a doctor that experiences a disease himself, will attract and better help people suffering from said disease. In spite of the fact that Dr. Strand attends to many other difficult conditions, close to half of his clients come to him for a resolution to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. As he became proficient in addressing this condition, this first-hand experience was a great asset to him in securing his Ph.D. on “Effective Naturopathic Treatments in Post Viral Chronic Fatigue Syndrome”.

He found that the reason why some doctors have a low success rate is because they don't understand what the therapeutic dosage should be in the field of naturopathic medicine. In conventional medicine, one prescribes specific doses of drugs indicated by a pharmaceutical company. Standards in naturopathic medicine are different as one is recommending concentrated extracts of foods, plants, nutrients or homeopathic. A practitioner creates a personalized program for a patient. It's not the herbs, or nutrients that work, it's the knowledge behind it together with clinical experience in treating these cases. It definitely helps when a doctor has gone through the misery of these symptoms himself. He understands better.

In ancient China, a village doctor was paid wages by the village or community when no one was sick. Once someone fell ill, the wages were cut until such time that the doctor would cure the condition. One wonders if any doctors would survive if there was the same policy here in America. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is the descriptive name of a syndrome characterized by a myriad of seemingly unrelated symptoms. The determination is made on the basis of certain symptoms and the ruling out of other ailments that could cause these conditions. The major criteria used to distinguish CFS are:

- 1) Persistent fatigue that does not resolve with bed rest and that is severe enough to reduce average daily activity by a least fifty percent for at least six months.
- 2) The presence of other chronic clinical conditions, including psychiatric disorders, can be ruled out.

CFS was hardly known in the 70's and it was often misdiagnosed as hypochondria or a mental problem. “You've got it all in your mind.” I find even now here in America some practitioners have this type of approach. At the end of the “90's” it has become one of the most common ailments people talk about.

Most clinicians dealing with a reasonable amount of CFS cases observe certain patterns of deregulation of immune and hormonal/metabolic systems as well as the whole body's detoxification system.

These cause the symptoms mentioned before. CFS is not only a vastly complex illness, but also one escalating alarmingly in frequency. Epidemiological studies confirm that it is spreading and crossing all boundaries, including socioeconomic, racial, political, gender, occupational and geographical.

The most common antibodies discovered in CFS patients, were those of Epstein Barr Virus (EBV), Cytomegalovirus (CMV) and Barmah Forst Virus (BFV). Dr. Strand says that in Australia another virus, Ross River Virus (RRV) was also an example of a trigger of Chronic Fatigue with Fibromyalgia.

Virus-induced metabolic and physiological changes in the body of CFS victims appear to cause 5 major areas of derangement or metabolic blocks:

- 1) Impaired ATP production in cells causing lack of physical and mental energy.
- 2) Disturbance in brain neurotransmitters and possible block of flow or production of precursors, to catecholamines and serotonin, causing depression.
- 3) Other imbalances in nerve chemistry facilitating anxieties, mood swings, emotional problems and insomnia.
- 4) Fluctuation in hormonal metabolism, that is evident mainly in underactivity of the adrenal output and in female hormonal imbalances.
- 5) The consequences of failings in the proper functioning of the immune system may be twofold, frequent colds and flu (under activity of the immune system), and /or allergies, hypersensitivities, and autoimmune type responses (over activity of the immune system).

“I find that among the people who suffered from CFS or Fibromyalgia for more than 10 years, 20% seem to fall in love with their disease. I have no idea why this happens. Maybe the reason for this is that people go from one practitioner to another and after continued failure, they give up. I'm saying call me and talk with me before you totally give up and talk to dozens of my patients and hear what they have to say.”

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