



**Your Market
is Our Readers.
Let Us Introduce
You to Them!**

natural
awakenings

Contact us today
to advertise in
our next issue.
555-555-5555

wise words

Terry Wahls on a Paleo Approach to Autoimmune Diseases

by Sandra Yeyati

Twenty years ago, University of Iowa Clinical Professor of Medicine Terry Wahls was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). Conventional treatments didn't work, and her health deteriorated to the point where she was wheelchair-bound and facing a progressively grim future. Through rigorous scientific study and clinical trials, she developed a groundbreaking diet and lifestyle protocol that allows people to take control of their health, reversing many chronic disease states, including her own. She is the author of *The Wahls Protocol: A Radical New Way to Treat All Chronic Autoimmune Conditions Using Paleo Principles*, as well as an accompanying cookbook, *The Wahls Protocol Cooking for Life*.

What is your personal journey with multiple sclerosis?

In 2000, I had problems walking, which led to the MS diagnosis. After consulting the best doctors and taking the newest drugs, I went downhill anyway. At my lowest point, already in a tilt-recline wheelchair, I realized that conventional medicine wasn't going to stop my decline into a bedridden, possibly demented state with intractable face pain due to trigeminal neuralgia.

My physicians introduced me to the work of Loren Cordain, who developed the paleo diet, so after 20 years of being a vegetarian, I went back to eating meat; gave up grains, legumes and dairy. I also studied



the basic science for animal models of multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and ALS, and decided that mitochondria—the organelles that generate the energy that cells use to run the chemistry of life—were leading to my early loss of myelin and brain cells. I also discovered The Institute for Functional Medicine and took their course in

neuroprotection. Based on the science, I devised a supplement program to support my mitochondria. My decline slowed.

Then came my "Aha!" moment: What if I redesigned my paleo diet, combining ancestral health with functional medicine principles, relying less on supplements and more on food to support my mitochondria? I did that, and my pain, brain fog and fatigue resolved. I began to get stronger, started walking. In three months, I was able to go for a bike ride with my family around the block for the first time in six years. It felt miraculous.

It changed the way I think about disease and how I practice medicine. I now talk to patients about diet, lifestyle, exercise, toxics exposures and stress management, and I'm able to stabilize, reverse and greatly improve their blood pressure, blood sugar, pain and chronic diseases that I was struggling to manage using the latest drugs.

What have you learned about resilience?

People who maintain a sense of control have more robust immune function and

are generally healthier. Many of my patients say that their diagnosis ended up being a tremendous gift because it allowed them to take stock of their lives and understand their priorities. That's true for me. If I eat gluten, dairy or eggs, or I'm exposed to too much stress or toxins, my trigeminal neuralgia will turn on and I'll have horrific facial pain, but I consider it to be a tremendous gift, because that's my barometer for the inflammation levels in my brain, which reminds me to look at my triggers and recommit to my self-care. We teach patients how to track their biosensors.

Are you cured of MS?

No. I still have the genetic vulnerability and lesions in my spinal cord, and will always be sensitive to gluten, dairy and eggs. If I become severely stressed or don't sleep, I'll probably have a problem again. I caution all of my patients: If you go back to your previous diet and lifestyle, your disease states will return.

Isn't it easier to just take a prescription drug for symptoms?

It's a smaller level of effort, but they're not cures, either. The underlying disease state progresses, so people typically need higher doses of their medications. They also develop co-morbid diagnoses that require new medications. Conventional medicine is effective for some symptom improvements, but it has never been evaluated for improving global health, whereas studies have shown that improving diet quality and incorporating exercise and meditation will improve multiple chemical pathways in the body, gene expression and your microbiome, and dramatically improve health outcomes across many disease states.

For more information, including diet protocol guidelines and online courses, visit TerryWahls.com.

Sandra Yeyati, J.D., is a professional writer. Reach her at SandraYeyati@gmail.com.

GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Secure this ad spot!

Contact us for special ad rates.

555-555-5555



natural
awakenings