

Nutritional Medicine

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I frequently receive review copies of books, and I often wonder why good trees were destroyed to produce so many books of little redeeming value. Sometimes the information is seriously flawed, or there is simply no obvious market for the book. As a consequence, the number of “keepers” for my personal nutrition library is relatively small.

Nutritional Medicine is definitely one of the “keepers,” and I highly recommend it for both clinicians and serious readers of nutrition books. It is exhaustive, well written, and contains a true wealth of information. If the book’s price (\$295, plus shipping) seems a bit high, it is definitely worth the investment and will likely last a lifetime.

The author of *Nutritional Medicine*, Dr. Gaby, has a true love and exceptional grasp of nutritional medicine. His book is a comprehensive clinical manual for clinicians who need a reliable resource for applying nutritional therapies in the treatment of a large number of diseases. Of course, you can search Medline (pubmed.gov) to find much of the information but online abstracts rarely provide context for or interpretation of the research.

Nutritional Medicine weighs in at several pounds and more than 1,300 pages. The book follows the organization of many general medical textbooks, including major sections of various types of cardiovascular diseases, pulmonary disorders, gastroenterology, liver diseases, neurology, rheumatology, musculoskeletal disorders, dermatology renal diseases, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, hematology, infectious diseases, and still other categories of illness. Within each of these sections are discussions of individual diseases, totaling 400 health conditions and the relevant nutritional therapies. The book also has sections on individual vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and other nutritional therapeutic agents. In-text citations identify

the original research, and the book contains 15,000 references; this is a true example of evidence-based medicine.

I’ll offer several examples to convey the flavour of the book. Like many other books, Gaby discusses the etiology and nutritional treatments of major diseases, including coronary artery disease and cancer. Refreshingly, he also addresses many health problems that are troublesome but do not seem to attract the same ‘mindshare’ as do the major causes of death. For example, how many nutrition book address melasma? In this section, Gaby begins with a brief descriptive overview (as he does with discussions of all the diseases in the book). I had been aware of the benefits of topical vitamin C in the treatment of melasma, but I was not aware of several other nutritional therapies that Gaby discusses, including the topical use of niacinamide and azelaic acid (which occurs in some foods).

Likewise, he begins the section on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) with an overview of the condition, followed by general dietary factors that impact the severity of COPD. He then discusses nutritional supplements, including N-acetylcysteine, magnesium, potassium, and other nutrients, which may moderate the symptoms of COPD.

In the section on hypoadrenalism (adrenocortical insufficiency), Dr. Gaby notes that mild hypoadrenalism is relatively common. He states the drawbacks to common testing methods, then discusses a variety of treatments, including cortisol, licorice root, and dehydroepiandrosterone, as well as vitamins and minerals that might be helpful. He adds, importantly, that prescribing thyroid hormones without first correcting adrenal insufficiency can lead to an “adrenal crisis.”

The only thing I would have liked to see included in *Nutritional Medicine* is a discussion of laboratory testing. I believe that identifying specific nutritional deficiencies and imbalances takes much of the guesswork (trial and error) out of administering nutritional therapies. I would have found a list of laboratory tests (for conventional measures

and nutrients), reference ranges, and optimal levels helpful.

Nonetheless, *Nutritional Medicine* is an exceptional and useful reference in my own library, and will prove helpful in my own writing and in my nutrition coaching practice. The reason is not just the information, but how easy the book is to use. I learn as I casually read through it, and the book feeds my curiosity with new information. You will find that it is well worth the investment. As I write this review, the book is not yet available at amazon.com. However, you can order it by going to www.doctorgaby.com or by calling (603) 225-0134. Two sample sections are available at Dr. Gaby's website.

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**Defeating Obesity, Diabetes
and High Blood Pressure:
The Metabolic Syndrome**

By Charlotte Gerson
2010. Gerson Health Media, Carmel, CA
254 pages ISBN-10:0976018632

When most people hear the words "Gerson Therapy," they think "cancer." The nutritional program of Max Gerson, MD, first emerged back in the 1920s and has withstood many tests over time. Essentially, it consists of abundant consumption of raw vegetable juices and high-nutrient, organic foods, along with detoxification via body-temperature coffee enemas. There are well-documented cases of patients being cured of cancer with the perennially controversial Gerson approach. Even HRH Prince Charles has weighed in on this, saying: "I know of one patient who turned to Gerson therapy having been told she was suffering from terminal cancer and would not survive another course of chemotherapy. Happily, seven years later, she is alive and well."

From the beginning, Dr. Gerson in-

sisted that his was not a specific therapy but a whole-body metabolic therapy. Indeed, Gerson did not develop it as a cancer therapy at all. He began the diet and juicing program for himself, and on himself, to cure his own severe migraine headaches. Patients knew him and sought him out as the "Migraine Doctor." In the course of treatment, many migraine patients started recovering from a variety of other, seemingly unrelated illnesses. Side benefits, as opposed to pharmaceutical preparations' side effects, is a very orthomolecular-friendly idea.

So is using nutrition to combat obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, the foci of this, the newest Gerson book. The author is the doctor's daughter, Charlotte Gerson. I have met Charlotte a number of times, first when she traveled to Ottawa for the induction of her father into the Orthomolecular Medicine Hall of Fame in 2005. I admit my bias as I say that Charlotte, now nearly 90, seems ageless and literally the picture of glowing health. One cannot fail to be impressed with her energy and with her many decades of experience carrying on her father's work.

Obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure are real killers. There is much to be said for applying the Gerson therapy to them, especially as all three are well-known to be diet and lifestyle related. A first impression of the Gerson approach may be that it is extreme and uncompromising. Consider the advice contained on the first two pages of the very first chapter: eliminate fast foods, meat, salt, and MSG. Drink four or more glasses of fresh, raw vegetable juice every day. Good heavens, by page 3, we have to start exercising and by page 7, cut out sugar.

Given the gravity of the diseases in question, I have a hard time seeing this diet as all that extreme. One does not have to open a Gerson book to be quite well aware that plant-based diets are nutrient-rich, high-fiber and low-calorie, and that salt should be avoided, that exercise is good, and that junk food isn't. For decades, Dr. Dean Ornish has been successfully treat-

ing cardiovascular patients with vegetarian diet and stress reduction. Dr. Benjamin Spock, the Baby Doctor himself, came to advocate vegetarian diets for kids. Allergist Dr. Benjamin Feingold emphasized the importance of avoiding food chemicals, especially colorings. Surgeon-Captain Thomas L. Cleave described and prescribed low- or no-sugar diets in the 1950s. Linus Pauling was firmly opposed to sugar. And Dr. Abram Hoffer is almost as famous for his “No junk!” food prescription as he is for niacin. Interestingly, among other supplements, the Gerson program currently urges 250 mg of niacin daily, about 15 times the US RDA. Max Gerson is in the very best of intellectual company. And, remarkably, Gerson was saying this back when first-class postage stamps cost three cents and Abram Hoffer was an undergrad.

Defeating Obesity, Diabetes and High Blood Pressure provides comprehensive advice ranging from how to reduce toxic environmental exposures, to how to reduce stress, to how to buy a juicer, to how to set up your kitchen. The book contains dozens of practical health hints, a question and answer chapter, interesting case histories and a conveniently-tabulated summation of the entire program. There are over 120 references to the scientific literature, and the book’s organization and indexing are outstanding. Ninety full pages of Gerson-friendly recipes are included. Read them over and see if they don’t look healthy—and tasty—to you. And lest we forget, Chapter 11 is about those coffee enemas. Yes, they have a history of valid medical use, and this chapter ably tells the story.

The book puts a lot of nutritional knowledge together, and then takes it further. “I am familiar with the Gerson method and believe that it has a lot of merit,” Abram Hoffer has said. “I have always been frustrated that it was not taken seriously and studied intensively as it should be. I think it has a very good track record.”

Defeating Obesity, Diabetes and High Blood Pressure is an open-it, read-it and do-it kind of book. There is something about

Charlotte Gerson’s writing style that inspires confidence. Maybe she is a natural-born author. Maybe she has great material. It is likely a good bit of each.

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