

The Benefits of Functional Medicine  
By Alice Levine  
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For those who are sick of being tired or tired of being sick, Functional Medicine offers new hope. Functional Medicine involves identifying and addressing the root causes of chronic illness by treating the whole body and identifying the underlying factors that are causing symptoms and adversely affecting health.

Dr. Susan Blum, an Armonk resident and founder of Blum Center for Health in Rye Brook, began her practice in Functional Medicine in 2001, after several years practicing Preventative Medicine. Dr. Blum said, "A Functional Medicine expert is like a medical detective who gathers many clues to a person's health history, including medical history, stress levels, sleep habits, diet, exercise level and current symptoms. We take this information, as well as the results of a physical exam and detailed lab tests, and we uncover why your body is not functioning the way it should be. The tests we recommend are more detailed and will give us more information than the tests performed at your internist's office." Dr. Blum then uses this information to develop a personalized program to help treat chronic disease and get the mind and body as healthy as possible.

Most of us are familiar with Integrative Medicine, which involves complementary treatments to Western Medicine. These treatments include herbal medicines, massage, yoga, biofeedback, detoxification and many other stress-reduction techniques. Functional Medicine utilizes many of the tools of Integrative Medicine and takes it a step further, with the development of a patient-specific treatment plan. The plan is tailored to the individual, since there is no one-size-fits-all approach in Functional Medicine. The goal is two-fold: to improve one's health and to prevent future health concerns.

Dr. Blum discussed one patient who suffered serious digestive problems after finishing her chemotherapy treatment. Based on the patient's test results and with the input of a nutrition consultant at Blum Center, a plan was developed for her that helped eliminate the problem. Dr. Blum said, "We have these kinds of miracles all the time, and our patients can't believe that something that has been bothering them for a long time can actually get better. It's not a quick fix, because you're changing things at the cellular level and metabolic pathways, but people are amazed with the results. Many of us simply accept debilitating symptoms as permanent, and we feel powerless to change them. Functional Medicine is all about helping to eliminate the symptoms and greatly

improve the individual's quality of life.”

Dr. Blum also emphasized the role that stress plays in many aspects of our health. She explained, “Many of us can get stuck in our ‘on switch’ mode. The adrenal glands produce too much cortisol, and health problems, such as digestive disorders, often result. The trick is turning the switch off. Identifying stress is only half of the equation: learning techniques to reduce stress levels is the other half. And there’s not just one way that works; it may be a combination of meditation, yoga and guided imagery, for example.”

Because Functional Medicine is a complement to traditional medicine, Dr. Blum stressed that a patient needs his internist or family doctor to treat serious or acute illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease or bronchitis, which sometimes require antibiotics. Most physicians practice acute-care medicine which often does not address a chronic patient’s needs. Specifically, it does not take into account the biochemical individuality or the genetic makeup of a patient. Dr. Blum said, “We utilize supplements, design nutrition plans, and offer mind-body classes such as meditation. The mission of our health center is to empower our clients to learn how to practice relaxation techniques and good nutrition habits at home. We want our clients to be proactive about their health. We also want to uncover why they may be suffering from conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or diabetes, for example. Our approach goes beyond treating the symptoms of a particular condition.”

The Blum Center for Health offers a wide array of classes which are open to everyone. There is a state-of-the-art kitchen facility and mind-body-spirit center. Classes include *Healthy Meals in a Hurry*, *Cancer Fighting Foods*, and *Detox 101*, to name a few. In addition, there are daily meditation and visualization classes. A Saturday workshop or weekend retreat will be offered every month, focusing on topics such as healthy everyday eating or mind/body skills and movement.

Dr. Blum is optimistic about the increased role of Functional Medicine. “When our health is impaired, it impacts every aspect of our lives. Learning new techniques to feel our best is empowering, and simply put, makes us feel good to wake up in the morning,” she added.

For more information on Blum Center for Health, please visit [www.BlumCenterForHealth.com](http://www.BlumCenterForHealth.com), or call (914) 652-7800.