

My Development as a Scientist and Clinician Scientist

Many of my patients have asked me how I became interested in Chronic Pain, Fatigue, or Lyme Disease. My simple answer is that it was inevitable, considering my interests, personality, and professional life/education.

Please, let me explain.

All of my life I have been interested in how things worked. My sister had reminded me how when I would visit my Father's mother's house, I would take apart a stopwatch or coin bank to see how they worked. My Mother's father was an engineer. When I would visit him, I would build things in his workshop and look at his electronic equipment to understand how they worked. My stepbrother thought of me as the "mad scientist" because I had a lab in our basement. When I was in grade school I built a short wave radio, among other items. In high school I became an Amateur Radio Operator (Ham). Biology, Chemistry, Astronomy, Rock collecting, and Electronics all became interests of mine. I was president of my Ham Radio club and Chess club. It was very unusual for there to be Electronics courses and Ham radio clubs, then.

It has always seemed to me that people have wanted to talk and open up to me. So, in deciding what would be the best way to be useful to society, use my skills, and enjoy what I do, I decided to go to Medical School.

My undergraduate education concentrated on the sciences, such as Biochemistry, Mathematics, and how certain bacteria work, including how antibiotics work.

I decided to go to Graduate School, in order to get into a medical school that I wanted. In Graduate school, I was in a PhD. only program in Pathology, with an emphasis on Clinical Immunology. I specialized in autoimmune disorders and why cancers grew without control. I developed a method of slowing their growth by changing the cell membrane.

And then, Destiny steps in? The MCAT, the medical school placement exam, at first included art and history as part of the testing... which I knew very little about. So, when they took those out... I did much better on the repeat testing. As a consequence of that and my Graduate work, I got into the Medical School that I wanted to, in 1979. And, I went into it as a much better clinical scientist, graduating from Medical School in 1983.

So much of understanding Pain, Fatigue, and Lyme Disease is understanding basic science, immunology, pathology, physiology, and laboratory testing. That is what the graduate school experience gave me. Part of what I did in Graduate school is to develop a laboratory test with similarities to ones being used to diagnose Lyme Disease.

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