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Chronic fatigue sufferers to welcome national expert

[Dana Clark Felty](#) | Tuesday, February 10, 2009 at 12:30 am



Mary Carter says she has overcome **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome** through nutrition, exercise and a line of homeopathic supplements endorsed by Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum. She adds the supplements to a smoothie every morning for breakfast. Hunter McRae/Savannah Morning News

Most everybody gets sick. So Craig Burgess, a healthy, 43-year-old business owner in 2001, at first wasn't too concerned when he came down with flu-like symptoms.

For days, he battled the achiness and exhaustion that come with the standard influenza, coupled with insomnia and foginess.

But then days turned to weeks, and weeks turned to months, and Burgess still found it almost impossible most days to get out of bed.

He sought the help of physicians but the standard tests offered no clue as to why he was so tired and weak. After ruling out other ideas, one doctor suggested Burgess had mononucleosis.

"He said there's really nothing we can do for it," Burgess said. "And I thought, 'Well, there's got to be something.'"

That's when Burgess stumbled upon the work of Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, an author, lecturer and physician who has dedicated his career to researching and treating people diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.

On Feb. 18, Teitelbaum will give a free lecture of the same title as his 1996 manual on chronic fatigue syndrome, "From Fatigued to Fantastic!" Teitelbaum is also the author of "Pain Free 1-2-3" and "Three Steps to Happiness! Healing Through Joy."

Teitelbaum is a former sufferer of chronic fatigue syndrome himself. Although it isn't universally recognized within the medical community, Teitelbaum describes in his publications his own battle with CFS while attending medical school in the mid '70s.





"In my struggle to heal, I discovered treatments that were unknown to the medical community and began a quest that became my life's passion - helping those who suffer from these debilitating illnesses," Teitelbaum writes on his Web site, Endfatigue.com.

Today, Teitelbaum serves as the medical director of the Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers, a national network of clinics that offer outpatient testing and treatment. Atlanta is home to one of such 13 clinics in the nation.

A lifestyle change

After searching for answers and discovering Teitelbaum's books and recommended nutritional supplements, Burgess said he was "back to normal" in about seven months.

"There were two things that made me feel better, one was acupuncture and the other were the supplements from Dr. Teitelbaum."

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The improvement also involved a lifestyle change, Burgess said.

Burgess sold his business, A&C Diamonds and Design, leaving behind the high-stress environment and six-day workweek and began paying better attention to his nutrition.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1 million to 4 million Americans suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome. Fewer than 20 percent have received a diagnosis.

Symptoms include constant fatigue lasting six months or longer, impairment in short-term memory or concentration; sore throat; tender lymph nodes; muscle pain; multi-joint pain without swelling or redness; headaches of a new type, pattern or severity; unrefreshing sleep; and malaise that lasts more than 24 hours after physical or mental exertion.

No single therapy exists that helps all CFS patients, and the disease affects each individual differently.

The CDC reports that many patients have reduced the symptoms through lifestyle changes, including prevention of overexertion, reduced stress, dietary restrictions, gentle stretching and nutritional supplementation, in addition to drug therapies used to treat sleep, pain and other specific symptoms.

A 'sister' illness

Teitelbaum calls fibromyalgia a "sister" illness to CFS. The disorder is characterized by widespread pain, abnormal pain processing, sleep disturbance, fatigue and often psychological distress.

People with fibromyalgia also often describe symptoms of morning stiffness, tingling or numbness in hands and feet, headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, problems with thinking and memory, painful menstrual periods and other pain syndromes.

Peter Brodhead, co-owner of Brighter Day Natural Foods, estimates that he meets at least one person a day seeking advice on their chronic fatigue syndrome.

"It's amazingly common," Brodhead said.

One such customer was former flight attendant Mary Carter. In 1996, Carter came down with pneumonia, at least that's what she thought.

"I just couldn't move. It was almost like you have mono, but I couldn't get over it," she said. "I could do, like, one thing a day and it would wear me out."

Carter was out of work for six months while battling the disease and seeking a diagnosis.

She sought treatment at an Annapolis, Md., clinic then run by Teitelbaum. Through a combination of prescription medications and [health](#) supplements, Carter said she was able to overcome the disease.

Now a resident of Isle of Hope, Carter said she's trying to bring all of her friends to Teitelbaum's upcoming presentation.

"He got me well," she said.

"Anybody who is chronically fatigued, and they can't find out why - or is chronically pained - they should go to his lecture."

If you go

"From Fatigued to Fantastic! - Bring Back Your Vitality & Live Pain Free," a lecture by Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, sponsored by Brighter Day and Enzymatic Therapy Inc.

When: 7 p.m. Feb. 18

Where: Charles H. Morris Center at Trustee's Garden, 10 East Broad St.

The lecture is free and open to the public. For more information, call Brighter Day Natural Foods at 236-4703.

For more help

The Fibromyalgia Support Group meets at 5:30 p.m. the second Thursday of the month (no meetings in December) in Room 3, second floor of the Heart/Lung Building at Candler Hospital, 5353 Reynolds St. Support group leader Pasty Wallace will teach a class on fibromyalgia in April. For information, call 819-3368.

Facts about Chronic Fatigue SyndromE (CFS)

- CFS affects 1 million to 4 million people in the U.S.
- CFS occurs four times more frequently in women than in men.
- CFS occurs most often in people in their 40s and 50s.
- CFS affects each individual differently. Some sufferers remain homebound and others improve to the point that they can resume work and other activities, even though they continue to experience symptoms.
- Recovery rates are unclear. Improvement rates varied from 8 percent to 63 percent in a 2005 review of published studies, with a median of 40 percent of patients improving during follow-up. However, full recovery from CFS may be rare, with an average of only 5 percent to 10 percent sustaining total remission.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov>.

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