

Beyond Exhausted

Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum sets out a plan to address Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and fibromyalgia.

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Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum knows from fatigue. He has experienced it himself. He has written a book about it, in which he details the treatment regimen he devised. He has a Web site devoted to it.

The third edition of Dr. Teitelbaum's book, "From Fatigued to Fantastic!" came out last fall. Aimed at sufferers of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, fibromyalgia and chronic pain, the book has reportedly sold more than a half-million copies.

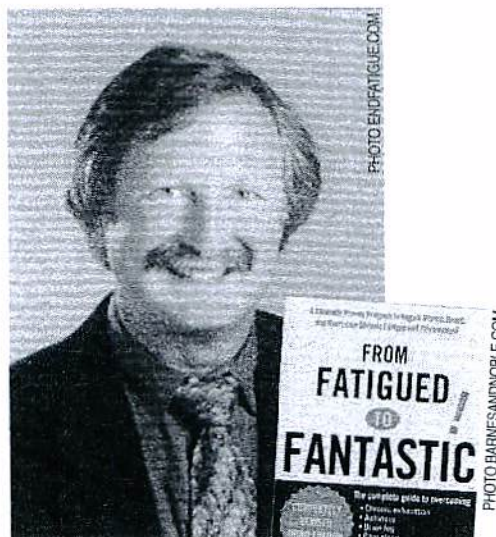
Contrary to the belief that CFS and fibromyalgia are symptoms of the "yuppie flu," they are "bona fide and devastating illnesses," said Dr. Teitelbaum, a board-certified internist, member of the American Board of Holistic Medicine, and medical director of the Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers, whose integrative medical message he travels around the world promoting.

Dr. Teitelbaum, who was interviewed by telephone, now lives in Hawaii, but for several years he lived in Annapolis, where he was a member of the Orthodox Kneseth Israel Congregation and one of the founders of the Aleph-Beth Jewish Day School.

Definition is a major issue for sufferers and their practitioners. Dr. Teitelbaum says CFS and fibromyalgia cause "fatigue that significantly interferes with your functioning and is associated with two of six other symptoms."

The six symptoms are: brain fog, poor sleep, diffuse achiness (in eight of 18 specific points), increased thirst, bowel dysfunction and/or recurrent and/or persistent infections or flu-like feelings.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a lengthier definition, which Dr. Teitelbaum discusses in his book. He acknowledges that the symptoms he lists can be



True Empathy:
Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum has himself suffered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

associated with other illnesses. That's why he says the first step in any diagnosis is a thorough examination to eliminate other common causes such as diabetes and anemia.

The number of CFS and fibromyalgia sufferers is debatable. Dr. Teitelbaum cites five separate studies that claim to give a figure of 2.5 million American CFS sufferers and about 24 million American fibromyalgia sufferers.

"Having had CFS and fibromyalgia back in 1975 [while he was a medical student], I know what patients are going through. The good news is that now, these illnesses have become very treatable," said Dr. Teitelbaum.

He calls his treatment plan SHIN, which stands for eight hours of Sleep, Hormonal support, treatment of Infections, and Nutritional modification and supplements.

"Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and fibromyalgia are one of the 'new specialties' that have not yet been identified and labeled as a specialty by the American Medical Association," he said.

In Dr. Teitelbaum's opinion, CFS

and fibromyalgia result from an "energy crisis" in the body, which happens when a person expends more energy than he/she can make. This overloads the circuits, causing a "blown fuse" in the hypothalamus. This gland controls sleep, hormonal function and autonomic function, such as blood pressure, pulse, perspiration and temperature regulation.

There are any number of reasons why a person would reach this point of exhaustion. Among them are overwork, infections, poor sleep, hormonal problems, toxic work or home situations, pregnancy and/or injury, according to Dr. Teitelbaum.

He believes that energy production plays an essential role in the treatment of fibromyalgia/CFS. He gives the example of athletes who participate in high-intensity, endurance-type exercise.

"They often face the fatigue and muscle pain associated with energy depletion. Typically, a few days' rest will allow an athlete's muscles to recharge," he said, although if the conditions that led to energy depletion are not stopped, the fatigue can become overwhelming and debilitating.

The SHIN protocol is developed on an individual basis. It involves sleep patterns, hormonal support, treatment of any infections and nutritional supplements, which are prescribed under the supervision of the fibromyalgia specialist. Other nutritional aspects are cutting down on sugar, caffeine and alcohol; and substituting whole grains for white flour.

Dr. Teitelbaum considers himself an expert in the field, and he now devotes his career to it. It comes as no surprise, then, that he believes fibromyalgia/CFS specialists should be the ones to consult. Otherwise, he said, sufferers may not get the relief they need.

"It's like going to an electrician because your lights do not work. The electrician checks the wiring, can't find a problem, and says there's nothing wrong. You flip the switches and they still do not work," he gave as an example. □

Dr. Teitelbaum's Web site is endfatigue.com.

