

Key Treatment and Consultation Considerations in Times of Uncertainty

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Question: What effect have the current times had on our patients and practitioners? Has it changed the way you look at common complaints? What are you doing differently?

This is a great question and it comes at a time when my treatments and assessments have needed additional attention. With that said, here are a few thoughts and treatment considerations.

The Current environment

I think for most of us, we are ready for 2020 to come peacefully to a close. We likely share dreams and wishes for 2021 to bring new energy and an easier road to navigate for our health care systems, businesses, leaders, country and planet.

Since the news broke of this novel virus, we all have gone through many emotions and stress, both consciously and/or subconsciously. We have felt fear for our health and have been asked to give up many of our freedoms to adapt to a new set of ever-changing rules. The systems and routines we have set up for our lives in years past have been forced to pivot, including family dynamics, school, work, play and leisure. The goals we had set prior to these times have been tested in ways we couldn't have imagined.

A Declining State of Health

Similar to other times of tragedy, life-changing events, or crisis, individual responses are unique and in a constant state of change. News outlets have reported the spikes in weight gain, anxiety and alcohol intake associated with lockdowns and mandates. As Dr. Ben Lynch has shared, cardiologists are expressing concern as their practices have never been busier ... but not from the virus itself.

Why would this doctor see a clinic full of 30-40-year-old patients with new blood pressure concerns, palpitations, atrial fibrillation, heart attacks and more? Surely a demographic that shouldn't be showing a major spike in these symptoms, but this stressful time has pushed many to a breaking point. Thankfully, we can help!

My patients are expressing their feelings in different ways. I am hearing sadness, fear, anger and anxiety in their voices, while others are seemingly unaffected. Some are suppressing their feelings; others are letting them pour out. It is interesting as always to consider constitution along with current situations to understand the patient's presentation more deeply and focus your treatment principle.

Whether infected with the virus or not, most Americans are in poorer health now than at the start of all this, in one way or another. Many of my patients are depleted and showing exhaustion. I want to

take this opportunity to brainstorm tools we have that can greatly impact our patients (and ourselves), now more than ever.

It is important to acknowledge that our energy and mindset as practitioners influence what we see in our patients. This can influence our clarity and diminish our treatment effectiveness if we fail to prepare ourselves for our work in clinic. Be sure to treat yourself first, just as you would put your own oxygen mask on prior to assisting others.

Treatments Ideas: Mindset and Setting Intention

I seem to be charting many similar treatment goals: to calm, anchor, regulate and tonify. Mindset is important to set as early as possible to better our treatment outcomes and change the environment for healing. I have noted a stronger need for encouragement and positivity lately. I start with building confidence in the body's ability to heal and making sense of why it is feeling or performing the way it is.

The body doesn't make mistakes; it is responding to stimulus and acting in its innate survival mechanism. We are here to help change the stimulus to help change the outcome. As we best identify contributing factors to what our body is currently responding to, we can then make a plan to better the epigenetics. Understanding this allows the patient's mind to assess possible roads to recovery and improvement.

Remember that our body has the most amazing ability to heal! We internally produce incredible compounds to improve almost any ailment known to us when we remove the imbalances that impede optimal flow and function. Sometimes, improving treatment outcomes can be as simple as having our patients say affirmations aloud such as "My body's is hardwired to heal!" or "I believe my body can heal and thrive" to shift their mindset and thought pattern.

Lifestyle Factors

Now is the time to encourage patients to restore as many basic health habits as possible. The COVID pandemic has shifted so many habits in longer-term ways than originally thought. Remind your patients what they can do for their diet, exercise, sleep environment, breathing practice and stress management.

What Can You Consider Doing This Week with Some of Your Difficult Patients?

In recent weeks, I have noticed improved outcomes with my complex cases when I start with auricular acupuncture based on tongue/pulse and presentation right away. *Shen men* and parasympathetic points can quickly calm the mind and regulate the body back from despair to a state of repair. I will insert these as soon as I have enough information to get started.

Another protocol I have used more often than ever is the *zen* / calming triangle (Buddha's triangle): Lu 9, Ht 7 and P 6. This combination is effective at easing stress, calming the mind and reducing anxiety. I find it provides a calm, cool and collected spirit. When appropriate, such as in more severe spleen *qi* deficiency caused by stress and anxiety, I will add St 36, Du 20 and *si shen cong*, adding clarity and energy.

After further consult and during appropriate treatment modalities, I have patients perform specific

breathing patterns and guided imagery to support the treatment principle. I recommend daily *qi gong* and meditation to replace screen time and social media, along with a supportive herbal formula.

Suggestions for those who are feeling:

- Lack of control of their life: *tai qi*
- Anxious: alternating nostril breaths
- Tired / exhausted: *qi gong*
- Stressed: reduce caffeine and alcohol intake
- Unable to sleep well: decrease screen time and improve sleep environment
- Sedentary and unmotivated: 30-60-minute walk per day

In these challenging times, our ancient solutions continue to bring results. The world seems to have changed as we knew it; but hold true to the basic health principles upon which our medicine is founded. We are more important than ever to help our communities heal and stay strong.

Editor's Note: Ask the expert! Have a question for Dr. Dillberg about this article or another topic? Email him at dustindillberg@gmail.com. Your question may be the subject of a future column.

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