

# Hypertension Management Nutrition & Lifestyle Changes

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"How did we get to a place in medicine, where it is considered unconventional to ask people to stop smoking, meditate, walk, and eat a healthy diet and conventional to cut people open, blow balloons up in their arteries, and put radioactive stents in them." That quote from Dean Ornish is just part of Dr. Alex Vasquez's style of "wake up and pay attention." In his new book, "Chiropractic Management of Chronic Hypertension," Dr. Vasquez says "the field of complimentary or integrative medicine should own or be the definitive response in the treatment of hypertension."

Dr. Vasquez, who holds degrees in osteopathy, chiropractic, and naturopathy, discusses that over 90-95% of hypertension is considered idiopathic which by definition means "of no known cause" and according to the medical community is therefore



"appropriate" for treatment with drugs. Medical standards dictate that antihypertensive drugs have to be taken for the rest of the patient's life.

One of the revelations for me was the understanding that really good antihypertensive drugs only reduce blood pressure somewhere on the order of -14 points in the systolic side and -10 points in the diastolic number. And because the reductions are so slight for each drug, they have to be used in combination. So it is very common for a patient to

be on several expensive hypertension medications for life, medications that can cause serious side effects long term and do not address the underlying physiologic causes.

Consider that hypertension is more than a disease. It is a business, BIG business. "Among allopathic /osteopathic family medical practices it is the leading cause for patient visits and clearly the leading diagnosis in family medical practice." Direct annual costs far exceed 185 billion per year in the U.S. In fact in 1998,

the direct costs of hypertension in the USA were calculated to be 12.6 % of health care expenditures.

But this is where the light came on for me. Patients managed with allopathic medications are expected to be on those medications for life. Patients managed with nutritional and lifestyle modifications should also be instructed to follow recommendations for life. But I for one have been lacking in my emphasis that patients must see hypertension as a warning light in their "health dashboard" and make major lifestyle changes.

Hypertension means they are walking toward the edge of the cliff of cardiovascular disease and strokes. We have to help them to understand that they can stop and turn around; however, they must continue these changes for life, not 6 months. Although the title of Dr. Vasquez's book boldly includes chiropractic, there is plenty of grist for the mill for all of us who are not chiropractors.

Speaking of chiropractic, over 25 years ago my father came to one of our multidiscipline clinics with a blood pressure of 220/120. After three chiropractic visits, the numbers dropped to a staggering 160/100. After reviewing his lab work, we found elevated heavy metals specifically cadmium. Six months on a nutrient dense program and we were able to drop it further to 120/80. What makes his story so amazing is that he continued to work 16 hours a day, fathering nine children while being treated. So the treatment was effective even under extreme stress.

Finding the source of hypertension is detective work and may take multiple visits and several tiers of lab testing. That's one of the shining stars in Dr. Vasquez book. He discusses the pros and cons of the current medications. He discusses why in some case nutrient therapy is

not effective and gives the lifestyle changes that generate the conditions from which health springs. Dr. Vasquez's naturopathic background brings a fresh perspective to nutrient therapies.

Of course, Dr. Vasquez covers these topics more extensively in his book, but here are few of the nutrient/therapeutic combinations to think about. Chiropractic supervised water only fasting can be very effective with hypertension. One trial of 174 consecutive hypertensive patients averaged a drop of -37/-13. Those with higher blood pressure dropped the farthest. Patients with levels higher than 180/110 had an average reduction of -60/-17.

Dr. Vasquez reviews six studies suggesting Coenzyme Q10 can reduce blood pressure numbers by -18/-12. Reaching healthy vitamin D blood levels reduces numbers by -13/-7.

Also, food allergy elimination can have mild to curative properties and should be assessed with challenging patients. I have included a summary page below as well as Dr. Vasquez's five part wellness protocol that he uses with all his patients.

Remember, it is not uncommon for medications to cost over \$150.00 per month. For \$150.00 per month we could put our patients on a thorough nutrient program while we counsel them on lifestyle changes. They will realize tremendous collateral benefits.

Don't you think it's time to let our community's know that we are the experts? I encourage you to develop and use word pictures in convincing ways to help patients understand that natural medicine is the treatment of choice for hypertension.

Thanks for reading this week's edition. I'll see you again next Tuesday.