

## BEH PODCAST EPISODE 33

### AUTOIMMUNITY AND EYE DISEASE PART 1

Today, we're going to be doing the first talk of part of our three-part series on autoimmunity. I've been getting questions about autoimmunity, and specifically there was one question last week that prompted me to do a series on the topic. The main idea of this series is to talk about autoimmunity and eye disease, how they are related, and what to do about them. This series leads into the Detoxifying Your Home And Detoxifying Your Body workshop, or as I like to call it, the do-it-yourself detox course, which we will be doing in October. You'll see in the talk next week why the toxins are so important, but I'm not going to talk so much about toxins today. I know that's an intriguing topic, but hold off questions on toxins until next week. There are a few reasons I want to spend time on autoimmunity in this conference call. It's becoming much more common, not just for people with eye problems, but everybody. Unfortunately, it can worsen your degenerative eye disease but, there are steps you can take to treat it.

The journalist Donna Jackson Nakazawa wrote a book called *The Autoimmune Epidemic*. She wrote that book many years ago. Unfortunately, it's not a very good book, and I don't recommend you go out and get it. But when it first came out, it was well received and well criticized. People thought it had good information, and she was talking about the very things that I've been talking about, the things we're going to be talking about here. That said, she's coming at it almost purely from a Western Medicine, allopathic perspective, so when it comes down to treatment, we have different approaches. The advice in the book, comes down to taking toxic drugs and steroids and things like that. One of the things about *The Autoimmune Epidemic* that made it interesting to me was that she acknowledges that food sensitivities, toxicity, emotional stress and out of balance gut biome and infections can lead to autoimmune disease.

So, autoimmune disease is common, that's one of the reasons I want to talk about it here. And it can look like a lot of different things, but there is a core similarity between all the autoimmune diseases. I'll name some of the diseases later.

The other reason I just want to say up front that I want to talk about this in the context of this call is that there's increasing evidence that autoimmune disease complicates these different eye problems that all of you are struggling with. That is especially true of the degenerative eye disease, like Macular Degeneration, Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) and Stargardt Disease. I chose my words very carefully there. Autoimmune problems complicate those disease. It is clear that autoimmune problems do not cause problems with your eyes. In other words, degenerative eye diseases are not autoimmune diseases. But autoimmune diseases are common, and they effect the eyes. When you have a worrisome disease that leads to loss of vision, autoimmune problems just make it worse. It means that you essentially have two problems in your eyes. Allopathic literature and the western medical literature understand the relationship between autoimmune problems and RP fairly well. From my perspective in my practice, I think the association with autoimmune problems is common in both Macular Degeneration and Stargardt Disease.

Even though autoimmunity may affect all of us in some degree, there are things you can do about it. It isn't just a theoretical conversation. It isn't, "Oh you have an autoimmune disease, I'm sorry." There are things that we can do to quiet down your over-active immune system and back you out of it. The next thing I want to talk about it, is just a little bit of background about the understanding, the current understanding about autoimmune disease. Again, this is not some crazy alternative medicine understanding, this is mainstream medicine. This is stuff that's being looked at UCLA and other centers around the country.

We've learned a lot from our ability to look at complex molecules like DNA and molecules used by the immune system. A lot of the work that went into decoding our DNA and DNA sequencing, is also applicable to sequencing other complex molecules in the body, most notably, antibodies, and immune proteins. The ability to sequence these molecules has led to a better understanding of what's behind the formation of some of autoantibodies, which are antibodies you form which attack your own tissues. The basic understanding of autoimmune disease is that results from an immune system that is out of control. An immune system that is so reactive, so twitchy, so angry, that it boils over and creates antibodies that attack your own tissues.

There are many causes of an overstimulated immune system. There are things that you would all understand. Environmental allergens like dust, pollen, cat hair, dog hair, whatever it is you're allergic to, or even formaldehyde from the new carpet that you bought can irritate your immune system. There are foods that you might be sensitive to, which would also irritate your immune system. There are sensitivities to cow-dairy, wheat, eggs, tomatoes, shrimp and many other things. Emotional stress, or emotional toxicity, is another thing that stimulates your immune system in a bad way. Toxins are obviously toxic to your body, that's bad enough, but they also evoke an immune response. Chronic infections can also overstimulate your immune system. That includes things like Lyme disease, Hepatitis, AIDS. Something slightly more common is when you have a biome that is out of balance. A biome is the combination of things that are living in your gut, and if that population is out of order it can cause an immune reaction in you. You may have gum disease, gingivitis, chronic inflammation in your gums, that can be causing overstimulation. You may have viruses that are chronic, like herpes.

I name all these things because it's never just one of these things, it's always a combination of a number of these things together. It's the infections, emotional toxicity, foods that we eat, toxins including heavy metals, infections and even environmental things. Of all these things, the environmental causes are the hardest ones to do anything about. We all have to breath air, drink water and eat food. The idea of autoimmune problems is that all of these things together tax your immune system to the point it boils over and in that state it starts making antibodies against your own tissues.

The thing that no one really understands is why that same setup, that same combination of factors can produce things that look so different in different people. So, all of these toxins and immune systems boiling over in one person it may look like Thyroiditis, an immune thyroid disease. In another person, it may look like inflammatory bowel disease. In another person, it may look like inflammatory arthritis. Someone else might have an Eczema, Psoriasis or another skin disease. Another might have a kind of asthma or lung inflammation. I don't know why in one person it's the thyroid that's affected and in another person it's the gut and in another person it would be the brain and the eye. No one understands that. How you express

autoimmune problems is just a personal thing. Maybe that part of your body was where you were vulnerable or I could make up some other explanation, but in the end no one knows.

The point is that the underlying setup is the same for all these different diseases. Even though they are called different things, and looked at differently, they are all much more common than they are different. The treatment for these ailments is to do what you can about each of the causes that I names just a minute ago. You want to clean up your diet, detoxify, work on your emotional stress, deal with the health of your gut, clean up any of your chronic infections and make sure you have good dental hygiene. You should clean up your environment in terms of cleaning products and pet hair and dust and other things that can be in our environment that might be causing you to react.

You don't have to do any of those things perfectly, but if you do the best you can with all of them, you can pull yourself back from that threshold you crossed. The threshold is where things got so bad that now you're having symptoms wherever that might be. If you do enough, the net effect is that you pull yourself back from the threshold and now you don't have symptoms anymore. It's a very effective strategy. I use it a lot, and it works. It's not easy. It's not a drug. That is one place where Western Medicine and integrative medicine agree in theory.

Western Medicine would also say that the problem is an immune system that's out of control, and the therapies that Western Medicine would offer involve drugs that would kill your immune system. The first level would be steroids like Prednisone, or something similar. The next level involves using other drugs that poison the immune system, and a lot of these drugs are cancer/chemotherapy drugs. One of the side effects of cancer/chemotherapy drugs is that they suppress your immune system. Normally, that is an unwanted effect, but when treating an autoimmune disease, we want that effect. That works, but at a great cost. The cost of using these drugs over many years is an increased risk of cancer and very serious infections. Even if you want the easy way out, and you go with what your allergist or your medical doctors says and you take those drugs, I promise you it will be a therapy that will only serve you for a few years. You will eventually reach a point where you will have to quit those drugs because of their toxicity, if they don't just kill you first.

The methods I propose aren't just a weaker way of treating these problems. It's also a much more sustainable treatment. We are trying to address the core of the problem, which is my favorite way to treat things, rather than just trying to suppress symptoms.

So that's sort of our first introduction to autoimmunity. We're going to be talking in the next couple talks about the relationship between autoimmunity and diet and the relationship between toxins and some of the things that can be done about emotional toxicity. We'll touch on all of them.