

# ***Fighting the Fog***

*It's hard to see. The thick fog has rolled in, blanketing the landscape.*



*What was once a colorful lush garden is now hidden beneath a veil of opaque shades of gray.*

*But one thing is certain - with dawn comes a new day, and a new beginning.*

*The mist dissipates.*

*We've found our way through the fog.*



## ***The Foggy Landscape: The Healthcare System***

When discussing fibromyalgia 'fog', what first comes to mind is the characteristic brain fog that impacts our ability to think clearly, find the right words and effectively articulate what we're meaning.

Today, I'm encouraging us to explore a new type of fog, one that impacts our ability to articulate our concerns to our healthcare professionals, and even moreso, obscures *their ability to listen to us: this is the foggy landscape of our healthcare system.*

On average, studies suggest that it takes approximately 5 years for a person to receive a diagnosis of fibromyalgia. Even more astonishing, a person may end up visiting about 15 different practitioners on their road to receiving this diagnosis.

After the most recent talk I gave at your association, I was pleased to meet many people actively searching for answers and looking for a better way. I must admit, although I'd heard similar stories before, that I was extremely impacted by the number of you that came to me saying how hard it was to find a doctor, and how in many ways you have felt left behind in the current healthcare system.

I began to think about this in greater depth. Why is it that any healthcare professional who has taken an oath to serve the best interests of the patient would reject a new patient, simply because they have a complicated case?

Since the diagnosis of fibromyalgia is already made in these cases, what is it that makes these practitioners shy away from agreeing to take you on as a patient, in our public healthcare system?

I suggest that it's not about the diagnosis, it's about *the management* that poses the greatest challenge. And about *the willingness and ability to take the time to listen* to a voice that desperately needs to be heard.

Once the diagnosis is made, people may end up trying many different medications, with varying levels of success. Even so, it may take numerous adjustments of these medications until they find the right combination to improve symptoms of pain, impaired sleep, fatigue and low mood.

With that said, these symptoms are not always predictable. And response to treatments may wax and wane, leaving the person and the practitioner with limited strategies for consistent success, and the need to reevaluate.

To properly reassess and troubleshoot these strategies takes time, and the desire to listen - *truly listen* - to your symptoms, concerns and personal goals for improved health.

I propose that there is a better way. And I am here to say that if you haven't already met one, there are healthcare practitioners who will listen, and who will work with you to fight the fog.

### **Fighting the Fog - A Functional Approach to Fibromyalgia**

At [Vitality Integrative Medicine](#), we believe in treating the person, not just the disease. This approach considers a foundation of Integrative Medicine - a combination of conventional (such as prescription) and evidence-based complementary therapies (including natural health products, nutrition and lifestyle).

**These interventions are focused on treating the underlying cause of the problem, not just masking the symptoms.**

This becomes particularly important as many people who have a diagnosis of fibromyalgia may also be diagnosed with conditions such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Sleep Dysfunction, Depression or Anxiety. Many medications used to support one condition may exacerbate the other. We look at the big picture (your overall goals for improved health) with the little picture (the impacts of different treatments on your body's physiology and inter-relationships among body systems), and help clear a way through the fog.

Many of our patients report feeling left behind in the current healthcare system, unfortunately. They may feel rushed at routine appointments, or may be waiting months to see specialists. They may have seen many practitioners, tried multiple therapies - but never had meaningful results.

**We believe you are not a number, you are not a disease; you are a person whose concerns count.**

And that's why we take the time to listen.

We conduct [comprehensive initial consultations](#) that last anywhere from 1 hour to 4 hours, and ask you to complete an Advanced Integrative Health Profile, a 20 page document I've created that explores a detailed history and inventory of your current symptoms and concerns, including physical, mental and social aspects that affect your life. We also discuss your short-term and long-term goals, and work with your doctor to help you meet them, through the development of a written Personalized Therapeutic Plan.

In many ways, we believe that you know your body best. If something 'feels off', even in the face of normal test results, we will listen to your concerns and work to help you take a step forward.

The time we take to listen makes us well-primed to integrate information and uncover relationships in your body that may not have been previously identified.

Your Personalized Therapeutic Plan is provided to you in writing. It focuses on areas of prescription and medication management (including interactions and drug-induced nutrient depletions), natural health products and detailed nutritional and lifestyle strategies. It also lists our care plan forward, which we take the time to discuss in-depth. From here, we would also create a specific formal written report for your MD and any Specialists.

We highly esteem collaboration and communication among other healthcare professionals, and are pleased to work with any member your healthcare team to help you to feel your best.

In doing so, we often become an advocate for each patient, helping them navigate through the healthcare system and helping their voice to be heard.

Your voice is worth listening to. If you are feeling low, please remember to listen to that voice inside reminding you that you are valued, listened to and cared for.

You can fight that fog!

And, in doing so, you can see a clear day dawning in your health and in your life.

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