

A DIFFERENT IBD FRAMEWORK

CURRENT APPROACH

It's time for a different framework for treating IBDs. This framework seems to come from the Chiropractic medical profession and I have tweaked it slightly to improve on it.

The framework is geared towards those who are willing and able to make changes in their lifestyle. Many people don't know that IBDs largely result from lifestyle choices and to heal from them will take lifestyle changes.

The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America (CCFA) states that the approach to treating inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs) such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis "has two main goals: achieving remission (the absence of symptoms) and, once that is accomplished, maintaining remission (prevention of flare-ups)." [1]

THE CURRENT APPROACH - SUPPRESSION

The induction and maintenance of remission is done through several classes of medications that suppress the inflammation rather than target the cause of the inflammation.

From the CCFA, "These [anti-TNF] therapies suppress part of the immune system by binding to and inactivating tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-alpha). TNF-alpha is a cytokine, a specialized protein that promotes inflammation in the intestine in other organs and tissues." [2]

Medication like Prednisone suppresses the entire immune system [3]. Imuran, does the same and even is used after organ transplants so the host immune system doesn't attack the new foreign organ [4].

We can clearly see from the above that the conventional approach to treating IBDs is to suppress and weaken a patient's immune system so that it cannot produce inflammation.

As we all know, there are risks involved when the immune system is hindered and warnings on a variety of IBD drugs state the potential to develop cancers and fatal fungal infections.

Sometimes the above treatment approach works wonders without side effects. Sometimes the side effects are worse than the disease. It's not uncommon for people to have concerns about the medications and their possible side effects.

Suppression is the current approach because the prevailing theory is that the immune system is over active and out of control.

IBD ETIOLOGY (CAUSE AND ORIGIN OF DISEASE)

If one wants to heal from IBDs an important question needs to be asked, "What is the cause of the inflammation?" Current medical research does not have a conclusive answer.

Promising leads point to a complex interaction between genetics, epigenetics, intestinal permeability, host immune system, host microbiota (which is 70-80% of the immune system) and environmental triggers [5].

You can't change your genetics, but you can change the expression of your genetics. This field is called epigenetics and lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise are effective ways to change the expression of your genes, which is like turning a light switch on or off.

Intestinal permeability (aka leaky gut) can be changed through use of glutamine, medical marijuana high in cannabinoids (CBDs) and probiotics [6], [7], [8].

Host immune system is regulated by the host microbiota because otherwise, the immune system would attack and kill the microbiota of virus, fungi, yeast, bacteria and helminths [9].

Environmental triggers including everything from toxins we breathe in, food we eat and drink and pathogenic microbial infections such as bacteria, yeast, viruses, and fungi.

Until research is able to clearly nail down the exact root level causative factors of IBDs, people can begin treating themselves with a different framework from the suppression approach.

It is an all-encompassing holistic approach that works with the body, not against it by changing our epigenetics, sealing intestinal permeability, regulating the immune system with balanced gut ecology and eliminating your environmental triggers.

Although, it my personal belief that there are hundreds of different kinds of IBDs and there will not be one single treatment and cure that works for everyone.

Some people have already cured themselves of IBD using stem cell transplants and microbiota transplants.

Those with IBD might have heavy metal toxicity that is poisoning the gut and once that is removed will see their IBD go into remission.

Others will need to repopulate their gut because of extensive antibiotic use.

A select few who have permanently damaged intestines due to Accutane use may need heavy use of supplements to decrease and ideally seal their intestinal permeability.

Until doctors know how to custom-tailor treatments for your specific needs, the 5-R framework is next best approach I know of. It is one that you can do by yourself if necessary and at your own pace. However, I do recommend creating a support team of doctors, health coaches, friends, and family [15].

THE 5-R FRAMEWORK

This "5-R Framework" is 80% based on the Chiropractic "4-R Framework" [10]. I have added one more "R" at the end to make it what I believe is one of the most comprehensive approaches to treating IBDs I have come across.

It touches every aspect of your life and if you give it 100% effort I think you will see at the very least improvements in your health, if not outright induction and long term maintenance of remission.

Let's begin with an overview of the 5-Rs:

- (1) Remove – Remove the chemicals, food, and toxins in your environment that may be inflaming your intestines, killing your beneficial microbiota, feeding your pathogenic microbiota and triggering your immune system once they enter your blood.
- (2) Replace – Replace your diet with healthy fats, nutrient dense and toxin free food. Use supplements to fix deficiencies until no longer needed.
- (3) Reinnoculate – Reinnoculate your gut ecology with beneficial microbial probiotics that have many benefits including to help regulate and restore balance to your immune system. These probiotics includes yeast, bacteria and helminths (microscopic parasites)
- (4) Repair – Repair damage to your intestines using supplements and sleep at least 8 to 9 hours every night to aid your body in its repairing functions.
- (5) Reconnect – Reconnect is one I decided to add to the existing and well established four above. This means to reconnect with your body, mind and spirit. Reconnect with the environment, communities, lost passions and loved ones. Reconnect with what matters to you. This part of the framework can have strong influence on your mind and your mind has direct influence on your gut health [11].

Now that I've outlined the framework, you need to know what goes into each component of the 5-R's so that you can build and custom tailor your unique 5-R healing program.

Once you understand this framework you can do your own searching for treatments that plug into it. But for starters, here's what I see working for me and many others.

REMOVE

I see diets as a great way to remove many of the offending toxins (pesticides), chemicals (food additives) and foods (grains) that may be irritating our guts causing intestinal permeability, feeding pathogenic microbes and killing our beneficial microbes.

There are many different diets out there, but to keep from overwhelming you I like to suggest three that are very similar, but different mainly in how rigid their recommendations are.

- The Paleo Diet (PD)

- The Specific Carbohydrate Diet (SCD)
- The Gut and Psychology Syndrome program (GAPS)

What's great about these diets is that they are so encompassing and broad that even though most people focus on the removal of environmental triggers their benefits overlap other components of the 5-R program.

SCD and GAPS strongly recommend probiotics which falls into the Reinnoculate and Repair categories. Changing your diet to the either of the above three will undoubtedly help you reconnect with the environment.

The PD community has embraced a workout regimen called CrossFit, which helps you connect with your body and socialize with others because they don't allow listening to personal music players while working out.

Removing addictions to smoking and drinking can improve your IBD, especially since smoking is a serious risk factor for Crohn's disease.

Another part of remove can include the removal of pathogenic microbes, such as parasites, yeasts and bacteria. I prefer natural antimicrobials rather than pharmaceutical antibiotics, these include:

- Coconut Oil
- Raw garlic
- Manuka honey (the most potent) and normal honey
- Colloidal Silver
- Wild Oregano Oil

Always follow up anti-microbial regimens with probiotics because you have likely killed a wide variety of bacteria and yeasts which then leaves space in your gut for pathogens like *Clostridium difficile* (c. diff) to fill if beneficial ones are not introduced soon enough.

REPLACE

Many people with IBD are Vitamin D deficient [12] and I highly recommend getting your levels check and then supplementing as needed. I have found Vitamin D to very helpful not only for my IBD, but also for fighting colds and flus in the winter.

I have benefited from hydrochloric acid digestive supplements, much more so than enzymes, but both might help you to digest your food better, which will allow your body to absorb food nutrients easier and not trigger your immune system if food proteins leak through your intestines into your blood stream.

By eating on the PD or GAPS diet plans, they both advocate for organic food and wild raised meats to improve the nutrient content and safety. This will naturally replace the less healthy food you may have been eating before.

The Standard American Diet (SAD) also includes a lot of unhealthy fats and PD, SCD, and GAPS all recommend replacing those with healthier fats from avocados, olive oil, and coconut oil to name a few.

REINNOCULATE

Healthy bacteria help digest our food, release enzymes, vitamins, fight pathogens, regulate the immune system and seal up leaky gut. Our microbiota is a very important organ that doesn't get the respect it deserves from the medical community and is not well understood as of 2011.

To reinnoculate your gut with probiotics from beneficial microbes such as yeast and bacteria you can use homemade fermented vegetables such as sauerkraut, yogurt and kefir. These probiotics can be eaten as food or delivered directly to your large intestines via an enema, called a Probiotic Retention Enema.

A cutting-edge technique is to infect yourself with immune modulating helminthic worms, which are microscopic parasites. Helminths have very strong control over the immune system and help regulate it back to normal behavior.

Another pioneering treatment, the Microbiota Transplant calls for a healthy person to donate their fecal matter to you, which contains an entire ecosystem of microbes that commercial and food probiotics cannot compare to in quantity and potency.

The donor sample of human derived probiotics is then delivered into your large intestines via a Probiotic Retention Enema or during a colonoscopy. It can also be delivered into the small intestines via a nasal gastric tube. The microbiota transplants are like taking a chunk of the rainforest complete with all of its biodiversity and planting it on Mars to make a new habitable planet.

REPAIR

Dr. Alessio Fasano is a world renown Celiac disease researcher and his team made a discovery that nearly all autoimmune conditions, which IBDs fall under, have three things in common. (1) Genetic susceptibility, (2) Environmental triggers and (3) Intestinal permeability, aka "leaky gut" [13].

People with IBD are likely to have leaky gut [14], which explains how environmental factors like food or even our own commensal bacteria leak through the intestines, into the blood stream and trigger an inflammatory immune response because they shouldn't be in the blood.

The following can all help with repairing your digestive tract.

BONE BROTH SOUPS

The PD, SCD and GAPS diets above all recommend soup, especially bone broth soup, which is rich in minerals from the bones that can help soothe and heal the stomach and intestinal lining.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORIES

Anti-inflammatories like Cat's Claw, turmeric and omega 3 fish oils (cod liver and krill oil being popular) help keep inflammation in the body low and therefore help the intestines heal.

L-GLUTAMINE

L-Glutamine is technically a non-essential amino acid that is fuel for the small intestines' cells. Glutamine helps the intestinal cells stay healthy and work better during peristaltic (the rhythmic waves in the intestines to move food). I have personally found it helps lessen pain from scar tissue and strictures in my terminal ileum.

BUTYRATE

Butyrate is the same as Glutamine but for the large intestines. Gut bacteria also produce butyrate, but you can give yourself butyrate enemas.

COLLOIDAL SILVER

Colloidal Silver may have healing properties on scarred intestinal tissues based on my experience and the fact that silver is used to heal tissue for burn victims.

LOW-DOSE NALTREXONE

Studies have shown that LDN produces remarkable healing of the intestines and high remission rates in patients with IBD. It is also effective for many other autoimmune conditions [16].

Low-dose Naltrexone (LDN) is the only drug I'll support based on the fact that it has been around for over 50 years and has no serious side effects when used in low doses under 4.5mg.

The only commonly reported side effects so far are disturbing dreams, but many claim they sleep soundly and wake up with energy they never knew they had before.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Marijuana is a potent anti-inflammatory and it can help seal leaky gut.

SLEEP

Speaking of sleep, it's important to get 8 or 9 hours at least. This is the time that your body is not concerned with keeping you awake to solve the worlds' problems and so much of its energy can be spent repairing damage.

RECONNECT

Reconnecting your body, mind and spirit together and with your social networks of friends and family can have a strong influence in how you feel because there is a strong connection between the brain and the gut [14].

Practices like yoga, strength training and sports help you reconnect with your physical self.

Engaging in regular, in person social interaction boosts endorphins, which is why LDN works and may help your immune system.

You can explore religions that appeal to you, Emotional Freedom Techniques and meditation to deal with your mental and subconscious spirit self.

COMPLICATIONS WITH THE HEALING JOURNEY

If you have Crohn's disease, you need to watch for a complication that can arise from the healing process. When inflammation dies down, it turns to scar tissue if there is enough damage.

This scar tissue typically is in your small intestines and terminal ileum and can cause food to get backed up, creating partial or full bowel obstructions.

These obstructions can cause a great deal of pain and if not treated even perforate the intestinal wall creating a potentially fatal situation.

You'll know you are having bowel obstructions if after eating rough fibrous food you feel extremely full, as if there's a rock in your gut. You may have fevers at night, feel nauseous and in great pain.

I found treating my partial obstructions with glutamine and colloidal silver to work the best for me, without resorting to surgery.

Medical marijuana may be another option as well as anything that purports to heal, loosen or remove scar tissue naturally without surgery.

Surgery by the way will create future scar tissue and potentially create a vicious cycle of future surgeries to remove scar tissue caused by previous surgeries [17].

YOUR HEALING JOURNEY IS IN YOUR HANDS

Now that you know the 5-R healing framework and some of the many treatments that can fit into each component the rest is up to you.

There are no guarantees, no estimated time to see results, but I do believe if one gives it a 100% shot they will see improvements. If you are currently taking medication, there is nothing wrong with continuing to take it as you implement the 5-R healing program.

If you feel comfortable and you have no symptoms, you can taper off your medications slowly and see if you are able to live med-free while continuing to follow the 5-R program.

After a year or two, you can try experimenting with widening your diet to see how much you have healed. The exact make up of your 5-R tools for each component will be individual for your needs.

I recommend starting by choosing one of the three diets listed in the Remove component that appeals and excites you. As a natural result of changing your diet, you will do several of the other components in the framework with little extra effort.

Sources

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