SuperCharged Podcast

Finding the Root Cause of What Triggers Chronic Illness with Dr. Tom O'Bryan

Harry Massey: Welcome to the Supercharged Podcast, where we help you to enhance your energy, health, and purpose.

Wendy Myers: Bioenergetics is truly the future of medicine.

Harry: Imagine having a body charged with energy and a mind quick as lightning. Is that a superhero? No, that's you, supercharged. We'll be talking to experts who have studied the physics of life so that you can have energy for life. If you need some insights into not just thyroid issues, as we just heard in that example, but are looking to find out the root causes behind chronic illness, and what you need to do, you'll definitely want to hear today's guest, Dr. Tom O'Bryan of theDr.com. Hello, and welcome to the Supercharged podcast, today we're going to be covering the theme of finding the root causes for triggers, chronic autoimmune conditions, where the body is literally attacking itself, and how to tackle this. It's something that I suffered from for many years, so I had autoimmune Addison's, and it's really not very nice, and it led to chronic fatigue syndrome and all the rest. I'm a big fan of reversing autoimmune conditions. Now, we're also going to be covering strategies like looking at environmental toxins, and avoiding allergens like the common wheat

[00:02:00] allergy, which can be quite the little villain in aggravating autoimmune problems, along with lectins that all add fuel to the fire, can build up over time without you realizing. Anyway, there's a lot of issues that can come from bad bacteria in the gut, or when you have dysbiosis, and this of course, raises the question, how do we heal the gut? Which we'll also be covering, and we're also going to cover much more scientific research, so there's a lot to learn today on how to put out the fires in our body, and keep our immunity in top form. Now, here's a little background on our guest, Dr. Tom. Dr. Tom, he's considered a Sherlock Holmes for chronic disease and metabolic disorders. He takes the approach, until you understand how you got to where you are, you can't figure out what it will take to get you well. Now, as a faculty member of IFN, which is the Institute for Functional Medicine, and also, the University of Health Sciences, he teaches that the underlying mechanisms that trigger the development of chronic diseases, are the key to health. He specializes in

food sensitivities, environmental toxins, and the development of autoimmune diseases. In 2016, Dr. Tom released a docu-series that had over half a million views, and was called, A Betrayal, The Autoimmune Disease Solution They're Not Telling You, an investigation into our immune system designed to protect us, begins attacking our on tissue. Now Dr. Tom, he's also the visionary behind well, one of the first summits that ever existed, which was called, The Gluten Summit, A Grain of Truth, which brought autoimmune problems are like the body at war with itself. As Dr. Tom will explain, it's actually your immune system trying to protect you. In this podcast, you'll learn some ways to support the immune system, and reduce the triggers, and put out those fires as early as possible before you're dealing with major trouble. I began my own detective work on a mission to get to the bottom of what is attacking our immune system by asking Dr. Tom what is the functional medicine approach, and how does it tackle autoimmune conditions? Take it away doctor, or should I say Sherlock?

Tom O'Bryan: Hi, my name is Tom O'Bryan, I'm a functional medicine practitioner on the faculty of the Institute for Functional Medicine. I travel the world teaching about autoimmunity, the triggers for that. The most common one is a sensitivity to wheat

[00:04:00] that I speak about, but it's environmental toxins that are a primary trigger in the development of autoimmune diseases. In the world of functional medicine, people ask, "What is functional medicine?" The analogy I give is that if you've gone to a doctor because you have a number of symptoms, and you've been given a disease, an autoimmune disease diagnosis, it's like you've fallen over a waterfall, and you've crashed into the pond below. You swim up to the surface, and you spit the water out, and you're trying to stay afloat in this pond. The water's so turbulent, because the waterfall keeps falling into the pond. You keep living the lifestyle that created the disease, so you're in the pond of diabetes, or you're in the pond of MS, and we're just trying to stay afloat in that pond. We want to be able to stay afloat, we need to address the symptoms. Everybody's looking for the life jacket to stay afloat in the pond of their symptoms. That's really important, and you want the life jacket with the least side effects possible. Once you've got a life jacket on, you have to swim over to the side of the pond, get out of the water, walk up the hill, go back upstream, and figure out what the heck fell into the river that carried you downstream, and eventually over the waterfall, falling into this pond of diabetes, or psoriasis, or multiple sclerosis? That's functional medicine, is going back upstream as to what happened here. Until people understand that they have to explore what happened for them, that what triggered this eventual disease diagnosis, they'll stay in the pond of the symptoms, always trying to reduce the manifestation of the disease, as opposed to reversing the disease. The science is really clear, and the language they use, is you can arrest the development of autoimmune disease. One of the primary things you have to do, is heal the gut, balance the microbiome, look for the compromise of the gut lining called intestinal permeability. Look for leaky gut, see if you have it, have it identified, and then why do I have it? Fix the why's, and when you do that, so many times the autoimmune disease will go into remission. It doesn't matter if it's alopecia, meaning losing your hair, or if it's multiple sclerosis, or if it's vitiligo, which is white spots on your skin when you lose

the color of your skin. It doesn't matter what the autoimmune disease diagnosis is, when you go back upstream and see what happened, where this thing came from, and you eliminate that trigger, the what I refer to as gasoline on the fire, because all of our diseases are inflammatory diseases, all of the autoimmune diseases. The cell is always on fire, it's inflamed, so the first rule, is stop throwing gasoline on the fire. Well, what do you mean? Oh, I don't know, let's find out what the inflammatory trigger is for you. You have to do that exploration, you have to walk upstream to figure out what happened? Where did it come from? For anyone with an autoimmune disease diagnosis, the key here is to address the symptoms quickly, and effectively as you can with something with the least side effects possible, but that just allows you to get into the ballgame now to figure out where did this come from, and go back and correct the trigger that's been fueling the development of that disease.

Harry: Are autoimmune conditions just part of the body's natural human response to repel toxins to address those root causes upstream?

Tom: The new school of thought that's come out in the last 10 to 15 years, so it's actually an entirely new field. In the world of allergies, it was back in the 1950s where some renegade doctors were talking about putting a needle into a little pond, a little pool of peaches, and then poking the skin, and if there was a reaction to it, then that person had a problem with peaches. When they first started talking about this, they were called nut cases. What nonsense is that, right? Well, now we know the skin pricking test for IGE allergies has been around for 70 years, and is a valid test, right? At first, when the pioneers were talking about that, they were considered fringe, and not following traditional, good medical practice. In the world of immunology, there's an entire new field that has developed in the last 10 years, autoimmunology. There's so many research papers that have come out now that say when the immune system is attacking self, which is the definition of an autoimmune disease, it's attacking your brain, attacking your joints, attacking your skin. When the immune system is attacking itself, it's not a mistake, it's perhaps collateral damage, or it's what's called molecular mimicry, but there's a reason why this is happening. A very common reason is the toxins that we're exposed to, the bacteria, or bacterial remnants, I call it the exhaust of bacteria, it's called lipopolysaccharide's, or LPS, this is the mechanism that causes sepsis. Sepsis kills over 200,000 people in the United States every year, killed my mother. I know this one really well, and I know the mechanisms of this one. If you get this bacteria, or the exhaust, lipopolysaccharide in your bloodstream, your immune system is going to go after it to fight it. The way it does that, is that it stimulates the production of special forces soldiers like Green beret, or Navy SEALs, they're special forces, you don't mess with these guys. They're called antibodies, and the antibodies are primed to go after that bacteria, or that lipopolysaccharide. The way they know, the way they can identify, because they're going through the bloodstream. Your bloodstream is just a highway, there's lots of traffic on the highway, and there's no lanes of traffic, it's not organized. It's all going in the same direction, but everything is bouncing into each other. How do the antibodies know what molecules to go after? How do they know? They look for a signature, it's a protein signature. Let's say it's an orange vest, and so the molecules

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with orange vests, it's a protein signature, the antibodies, oh, look over there, boom, and they fire their chemical bullets. Over there, boom, and they fire their chemical bullets. The signature of that orange vest is a sequence of amino acids. I'm going to call it AABCD, so there's sometimes 30, 33 amino acids. I'll just call it AABCD, so now the special forces are going through the bloodstream looking for AABCD. Everywhere they find AABCD, they just fire their chemical bullets. Now the special forces are in the bloodstream, and I'm going to use the example of the thyroid. I could use the brain or the joints or the skin or the muscles, but let's use the thyroid. The surface of the thyroid facing the bloodstream, is made up of proteins and fats. The proteins include the amino acids, there are hundreds of amino acids which may include, in the thyroid it does, include AABCD. Special forces, it's going after the bacteria in the bloodstream, oh, look over there, there's an orange, AABCD, boom, they fire their chemical bullet at that orange vest, that's the thyroid cell. Now you've damaged a thyroid cell, now your immune system makes antibodies to get rid of damaged cells all the time, so you get rid of that thyroid cell. That's not a problem at all, that's what the immune system is for, but if you have what's called a leaky gut, and you get this LPS going to the bloodstream every day, special forces fighting it every day, and you don't feel it when that's happening, you don't feel it at all, but special forces are going after them every day, oh, look over there, and they fire their chemical bullet at the thyroid every day, because it's got the same signature. If that's your genetic vulnerability, that's where it's going to go,

[00:13:00] and you do this every day attacking the thyroid, then you make antibodies to get rid of the damaged thyroid cells to make room for new thyroid cells. Eventually, that thyroid antibody production becomes self-perpetuating. Now you get an autoimmune disease of the thyroid called Hashimoto's thyroid disease. It's very common that Hashimoto's thyroid disease will go into remission, complete remission when people go on a wheat free diet. For people that have a sensitivity to wheat, and many of us do, and the special forces are making antibodies to wheat, it's very common that they will mistake the surface of the thyroid, for the vest that the wheat molecule wears. It's very common that special forces goes after wheat, when someone has a sensitivity ... Excuse me, goes after the thyroid, when someone has a sensitivity to wheat.

Harry: Beyond the common allergy to wheat, does this also apply to other allergens such as peanuts and dairy and so on?

Tom: Oh my goodness yes, yes. Most doctors have heard that you never give newborn infants milk products in the first year of their life, if there's a family history of type I diabetes, you avoid it at all costs if you can. The signature, the vest of the antibodies going after a milk allergy, if that child happens to have a milk allergy, maybe they inherited it from mom or from dad, but they have a milk allergy, and you give that child milk, the signature vest that the special forces is going after, looks an awful lot like the beta cells of the pancreas. Special forces could start going after the pancreas, and those children that are genetically vulnerable to that disease, are the ones that absolutely keep them away from dairy in the first year of life. There's many research papers on that, just to be safe. Now, if nothing else is available, you of course give them milk, but there's so many options in most places in the world

now, that you don't have to give them cows milk. If mom cannot, or for some reason is not going to breast-feed, then there are other options that you can do. What's the general advice for anyone with an autoimmune condition? What's the best way to deal with allergies? What kind of allergy testing is recommended? When you have the diagnosis of an autoimmune disease, you don't mess around anymore, because you've got the disease. See, autoimmunity occurs on a spectrum, and at the beginning stages of the spectrum, you have elevated antibodies to that particular tissue. You don't feel when you've got elevated antibodies to myelin. Myelin is the saran wrap around your nerves that protects the nerves, the insulation around the nerves. You don't feel if you have elevated antibodies. In clinical practice, and I did 316 consecutive patients' blood test for this, and if a person had a sensitivity to wheat, and 68% of everyone that came in, if you do the right test, showed a sensitivity to wheat, of those people with a sensitivity to wheat, 22% of them had elevated antibodies to myelin. The molecular mimicry, the special forces going after wheat confused myelin, and went after myelin. First you get the elevated antibodies to myelin, you don't feel that, but you kill off myelin tissue, and you kill off more tissue, and you kill off more tissue, and you kill of more tissue, until eventually you start getting some symptoms. To give you a vision of that, the wire that goes from the battery of a car to the headlights, if you were to take off some of the insulation in the middle of the wire, and then you let that exposed wire touch the frame of the car, the lights flicker on and off. You say, "What's wrong with the lights?" There's nothing wrong with the lights, it's the wiring, that's MS. There's nothing wrong with the legs or the muscles in MS, it's that the message from the brain going to that tissue is not getting there properly. You don't automatically take the insulation off the wire, it's one molecule at a time. Elevated antibodies just killing a little myelin, killing a little myelin, killing a little myelin. That's the spectrum of autoimmunity, it

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goes on for years before you ever have a symptom. Then you get symptoms, and usually it takes a couple of years to get the right diagnosis. We know from the American Autoimmune and Related Diseases Association, that the average is between 3.5 and 4.3 years of going to see doctors after you've had symptoms. The spectrum's been going for a long time already, now you get symptoms. You go to a doctor, it takes 3.5 to 4.3 years of suffering and going to multiple doctors, before you get a diagnosis of an autoimmune disease. That's how bad it is, but the spectrum has been going on for a long time. What we know now in the world of autoimmunology, you can do a blood test to see, do you have elevated antibodies to your own tissue? If you do, if they're elevated on a blood test, that would be an H, meaning high. If they're elevated, you're killing off tissue. It's never normal to have elevated levels of antibodies, and this is a good point, so I'll bring this point up. When is it normal to have antibodies to your own tissue? When is it normal for the immune system to attack your own tissue? Well, we all know, we've heard that we have an entire new body. Every seven years we have an entire new body. Some cells reproduce very quickly like the inside lining of your gut, is every three to five days, depending on which study you read. Some cells are very slow, like your bone cells. We have an entire new body every seven years. How does that happen? Cells get damaged because of radiation, when you're flying up to 30,000 feet, or because of the wrong foods. Cells get damaged, and it's the job of the immune system to get rid

of the old and damaged cells to make room for new cells to grow. That's the antibodies, that's why if you get a blood test done for thyroid, I'll use the example of thyroid, there's a normal reference range for thyroid antibodies. When is it normal to have antibodies to your own tissue? When you're cleaning up the old damaged cells to make room for new cells. There's a normal reference range, but when you're outside that normal reference range, and it's high, they're elevated, you're killing off more cells than you're making. When you're killing off more cells than your making, now you're on the spectrum of autoimmunity. As that continues long enough for a few years, now you start getting the symptoms, and it takes a few years to get the diagnosis of the autoimmune disease. The answer to the question of should you do blood testing, is absolutely, yes. To see, do I have elevated antibodies to my own tissue?

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Harry: Once you have some balance and health restored, does this mean you can't eat these foods ever again in your life?

Tom: The question about lifelong avoidance of particular foods, is one that is not theoretical. Some doctors would say yes, some doctors would say no. My answer is ask the body. You do the blood test to find out, so if you had elevated antibodies causing celiac disease, and you get the wheat out of your diet, and the antibodies go down, and the tissue heals. Well, doc, can I eat wheat again? I've had that question hundreds of times over the years. Can I eat wheat again? The answer is, "Well, I doubt it, but if you really want to know, you can go ahead and eat some wheat for a while, then we'll do the blood test again. If the antibodies come back up, if they're elevated, then you know you can't." Rather than it being theoretical, the technology is so good nowadays, that you can ask the body, "Am I okay with this food or not?" You can find out if you have elevated antibodies whether you like it or not, it doesn't matter. Whether you believe it or not, it does ... I feel fine when I eat wheat, it doesn't matter what you believe. The rule, is body language never lies, your body will not lie. You just have to know how to read body language. In this discussion, it's do the right blood test to see do I have a problem with this food or that food? Am I being exposed to too much bacteria? Do I have the exhaustive bacteria, called lipopolysaccharides in my bloodstream? As I said, sepsis kills over 200,000 people a year in the United States, usually is elderly, but it's just toxic bacteria that's gone through your entire system, and the body can't function very well anymore.

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Harry: Other than avoiding the foods we are allergic too, what other steps should we take to heal toxins in the gut?

Tom: To heal intestinal permeability, the slang term leaky gut, the first thing you have to do is ... The phrase I use is stop throwing gasoline on the fire. You find out what are the triggers that cause the inflammation? Get those out of there, but once you've done that, you still have a fire in the gut, so you have to put the fire out. Now when you stop throwing more fuel on the fire, it may tone down, and it often does. When you want to heal intestinal permeability, or the slang term is the leaky gut, there are multiple steps of what has to occur. The first one, is you have to stop throwing gasoline on the fire. You have to stop putting the things in causing the inflammation in the gut. The most inflammatory substance for most people in autoimmune

diseases, is what's on the end of your fork. It's what we're eating that's the most common trigger. You have to identify the foods that are good for you, and the foods that are not good for you, and only eat the foods that are good for you, that's the first and most important thing. The second thing, is that the microbiome, the environment of the gut that has developed for you, is one that's not a healthy microbiome, that's why you've got a disease now. We have to rebuild the microbiome, so there's an entire protocol to rebuilding the microbiome. There's some wonderful testing to look and see what's the current environment like, and what food should I eat to help change that environment? Back a number of years ago, 30 years ago, we were using probiotics as the primary way of healing the intestinal permeability. Now we include probiotics, that's the good bacteria in capsules. We include the good bacteria, well that's where yogurt came ... That's why yogurt's supposed to be healthy for you, is that it has the good bacteria in it, right? You want to populate the gut with the good bacteria. There are some supplements that can help. My concept is, it's called a pleiotropic approach. What that means, is that all roads lead to Rome, right? There are many different substances that will turn the genes on to heal the gut. There are many, some doctors say, "Well, I give glutamine to heal the gut." Well, glutamine's really good to help heal the gut, but glutamine will not turn the genes on to heal that vitamin D does. Vitamin D will not turn the genes on to heal that curcumin does. Curcumin will not turn the genes on to heal that fish oils do. There are many different substances that can really help to heal the gut, and that's all worked out. There's lots of articles on this, many doctors know about that, about a pleiotropic approach, and not just one substance to help heal the gut. We have to stop throwing gasoline on the fire. We have to rebuild the microbiome, and then take the supplements that turn the genes on to heal. Many of us have heard that there's more bacteria than our human cells, and what the research papers tell us, there's 10 times more cells of bacteria in the microbiome than the human cells in the entire body, 10 times more cells in the gut than all of your bone cells, brain cells, organ cells, muscle cells, 10 times more bacteria than us. We know that genetics or our genes, determine our function. Genes turn proteins on, they turn proteins off. There's 100 to 150, depending on the paper you read, 100 to 150 times more genes in the microbiome, than there is in the human genome. 10 times more cells, and 100 times more directions coming from the microbiome. Usually it's after the second glass of wine at the end of the day with my friends, when we're talking, and we start talking about, are we really humans with a whole lot of bacteria, or are we bacteria having a human experience? As silly as that sounds, when you look at the science of it, there's a whole lot more of them than of us, and they're modulating, or they're controlling function. For every one message

[00:27:00] from the brain going down to tell the gut what to do, there are nine messages in the gut going up to tell the brain what to do. All of our brain hormones, they're called neurotransmitters, the control for those, the production of those, the balance of those, how they interact, most of that direction comes from the bacteria in the gut.

Harry: It's important to keep the microbiome bacteria in your gut healthy. What else can we do to keep our immune system healthy, strong, and charged? What kind of

environmental culprits are toxic to our system? What is the mechanism that is really going on with autoimmune disease?

Tom: The primary mechanism behind degenerative diseases now we know, is an autoimmune mechanism. It's your immune system trying to protect you. We all know that cardiovascular disease is the primary cause of getting sick and dying. It's the number one reason, heart attacks, strokes, for people getting sick and dying. There are, I don't know the number, maybe 75 to 100 studies that I've seen, that atherosclerosis, the plugging up of your pipes in cardiovascular disease, is an autoimmune mechanism. It's your immune system that's triggering the plugging up of your pipes. With that understanding, what we thought was the number three cause of getting sick and dying, autoimmunity, we now know it's the number one mechanism in getting sick and dying, is your immune system trying to protect you. That means that almost everyone is vulnerable to having this dynamic going on in their bodies, this autoimmune mechanism going on in their bodies. The primary mechanism behind your immune system getting activated, is that it's trying to protect you from the toxic world we live in. We know now for example, of the five types of Alzheimer's, inhalation Alzheimer's appears to be the most common type. Inhalation Alzheimer's means what you breathe in, goes right through your lungs, into the bloodstream, straight up to the brain, triggers the inflammation in the brain, that causes all the scar tissue called beta-amyloid plaque, that produces Alzheimer's. It's what we're breathing in that can be the trigger in your brain, that eventually years down the road manifests as Alzheimer's. It's the environment, it's what we're being exposed too, is that phthalates from the plastics we're exposed too. The phthalates, these toxic chemicals in plastic wrap that leaches into the food. In our plastic storage containers, these phthalates leak into the food. There was a commission in Norway, they went for three years looking to see, should we recommend that women not breast-feed after their first birth? It was a very serious study, three years they talked about this, why? What's that all about? We know breast-feeding is the healthiest thing you can do for a baby. In Norway, the fish that ... People eat a lot of fish in Norway, and the fish comes from the fjords. The fjords are long, narrow, deep bodies of water that run up and down the coast of the country. Well, the farmers have been spraying their fields for many, many years now, and the runoff from the rain is bringing these chemicals down into the fjords. The fish in the fjords have high levels of PCBs. People eat the fish, and the PCBs in the fish that they're eating, is not high enough to cause a problem, but you're eating the fish for 20 or 25 years. These small amounts of toxic chemicals can accumulate in your body. These chemicals are called endocrine disrupting chemicals. They disrupt your hormones, and so these chemicals bind on to your hormone receptor sites in your body. For men, it's the testes, for women, it's the breasts, the ovaries, the uterus, where a lot of these PCBs will accumulate. Take a 25-year-old woman, she's been eating fish in Norway for 25 years, or 24 years, minor amounts of PCBs every week coming into her system accumulating in her breasts and her other tissues. Now she gets pregnant, now she has a healthy pregnancy, she has a healthy delivery, and now she's breast-feeding. Well, her body gets signaled okay, start making breast milk, start making breast milk now. The breasts start producing

breast milk from the fat cells of the breast, which is where these PCBs accumulate over 25 years. The breast milk that's coming to baby is very toxic in a first pregnancy. This baby's immune system is not ... Their detox pathways and their immune system are not designed to handle this high load of toxic crud that they're getting along with the really healthy breast milk. Second baby is fine, because mom has detoxed all this stuff out of her breasts now, so the other pregnancies are fine. It's the first pregnancy, so a three-year study on this looking at all of the science behind it, and they finally came back and said, "No, breast-feeding is more important." Now I personally agree with that, but what my recommendation is, and many of us, our recommendation is women of childbearing age should detoxify their breasts before they get pregnant. They learn how to do that, it's about a six month to a year simple protocol to do, and then you're ready to go, and you're helping to ensure you're going to have a very healthy baby, and your breast milk is going to be the best food in the world possible for that baby.

Harry: How to detox program, it sounds like the subject of another podcast. That's all we have time for, for Dr. Tom, and if you'd like to check out his work, you can find him at [theDr.com].

Wendy: Please keep in mind that this podcast is not intended to diagnose or treat any disease or health condition, and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Please seek a medical practitioner before engaging in anything that we suggest today on the show.