

“Our critically toxic environment plays a crucial role in causing harm to the human body,” in the view of Dr. Bhavna Vaidya-Tank, founder of the Family Wellness Clinics in Raleigh and Clayton.

“Not only are there toxins in our food and air,” she notes, “but managing the care of our health, under these circumstances, leads to toxic stress in our lives.”

Along with physician assistant Lea Lott, Dr. Tank offered pathways to better health in a toxic world.

*Health&Healing: What are some of the ways you combat toxicity and who should detoxify?*

**DR. VAIDYA-TANK:** We, of course, encourage all our patients to eat organic foods and take appropriate supplements—as a starting place. And we encourage detoxification as well. Detoxification is important for the healthy as well as the sick, and is particularly important in addressing serious hormonal imbalances. Our goal is to teach each patient how to live in this toxic world and still reduce stress and risk. And, while there are certainly guidelines for healthy living that apply to everyone, it’s important to understand that each of us has a unique body chemistry, genetic background, and has individual needs and challenges. So each of us responds to the toxins we encounter differently.

At Family Wellness Clinics we give the Dutch Analytic Test, which helps us see how the body is detoxifying certain hormones and how we can affect a change. It specifies which hormones are in abundance and may be putting the patient at risk for cancer. Then we can detoxify that hormone and are able to tell you how you can use certain hormones and be safe.

We also talk to patients about the testing we do here and the type of antioxidants we use, such as a glutathione. Glutathione is one of the most powerful antioxidants available, and a glutathione IV (intravenous treatment) is one of the best ways to detoxify your body since the body doesn’t assimilate it as well orally.

*Health&Healing: How does the glutathione IV work?*

**LEA LOTT:** Glutathione is a powerful antioxidant. Our hormones are metabolized and recycled through the liver and there are different pathways that can metabolize our hormones. Glutathione helps detox the liver so that we’re able to promote those healthy pathways. For example, some people don’t metabolize their estrogen correctly and while there’s beneficial medicine to treat that condition, glutathione really helps detox and provide a clean slate for healthy pathways.

Glutathione is usually given once a month, or as needed. It’s great for particular cancers, detoxifying the liver, clarifying the skin, and simply feeling better. People also come in for it because it lightens the skin and makes it glow—since hormones and toxic chemicals can affect how you look. And



Dr. Tank, left, with Physician Assistant Lea Lott and the Harmony XL Pro multi-purpose aesthetic laser.

## Seeking Better Health in a Toxic World

“TOXINS IN OUR FOOD AND AIR . . . LEADS TO TOXIC STRESS IN OUR LIVES.”

a glutathione IV can help you feel better after an exhausting trip or help your liver process junk foods faster.

*Health&Healing: Stress is certainly one of the toxins we face today; what do you offer patients who are dealing with significant stress?*

**DR. VAIDYA-TANK:** In today’s world we’re all busy and working and we too often forget to practice self-care. When a patient is stressed, their cortisol levels are usually erratic—with a huge impact on overall health. And the truth is, we often don’t realize how stressed we are and how much that stress is affecting our sleep and our relationships.

We have found that the best approach is to develop an individualized health plan—taking into account the patient’s specific health issues, lifestyle, and needs.

For example, I have a patient who works nonstop and travels half of every month. She won’t take a lot of vitamins because she travels. She also has really bad dyspareunia, which is the inability to have sex without pain. She is menopausal, stressed, having hot flashes, unable to sleep, and generally exhausted. I couldn’t give her anything oral because of her excessive traveling, so I put together a regimen to help her detoxify all the bad food she eats when on the road. I put her on a glutathione IV every other week, designed especially for her, plus a few supplements that she could handle.

Then I put her on a combination hormone pellet that’s placed under the skin for three or four months that consistently releases doses of hormones. She doesn’t have to do a thing to manage that treatment. I also started her on sermorelin, a growth hormone analog to aid anti-aging, that helps the patient make their own growth hormone, lose weight, and clarify the skin. She came back two weeks later and said, “My husband loves you! I can actually have sex

without pain.” She was smiling and feeling great after just having two glutathione IVs and the pellet.

**LEA LOTT:** It really is so important to address each case individually. With some autoimmune thyroid diseases, like Hashimoto’s, there are so many toxins involved in addition to your immune system attacking your thyroid. What people don’t realize is that some of the things we’re ingesting, like gluten, are actually leading to that autoimmune response. We have patients whose lab numbers aren’t adding up with how fatigued they are. We check their antibodies and they’re high. By putting patients on a gluten-free diet their antibodies are greatly reduced and they feel better without changing their thyroid medication dosage.

*Health&Healing: Talk about hormone imbalances: what are they, where are they coming from, and what do they do to the body?*

**DR. VAIDYA-TANK:** Our meats and dairy are injected with hormones, and soy is added to a lot of foods—these can actually increase the production of estrogen and growth hormone. The patient’s going to feel bad if there’s too much estrogen and not enough progesterone; or if there’s too much progesterone and not enough estrogen. It’s this imbalance that leads to the symptoms that people feel. We can do a glutathione detox to help decrease estrogen and they can stay away from toxins, such as hormone injected meat, soy, or even BPA plastic, but that’s only going to do so much. A person who’s high in estrogen and feeling breast tenderness and mood swings needs some progesterone to help balance things and feel better.

*Health&Healing: PCOS is on the rise. What is it and why is it increasing?*

**LEA LOTT:** PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) is a disease that affects a lot of young women of reproductive age, making them unable to conceive because high estrogen and testosterone levels create cysts on their ovaries. PCOS is also associated with obesity, because estrogen is carried in your adipose tissue. When you’re heavy you have extra estrogen, so that’s going to cause a high estrogen state. It’s not known whether it is caused by weight gain, or if it’s the disorder of hormones that causes the weight gain.

When there’s a lot of estrogen, the body is going to transfer some of it into testosterone. If a female is high in testosterone, it will transfer to estrogen. Women with PCOS don’t menstruate because they have too much estrogen with a lack of progesterone; you need progesterone to bleed. If you don’t menstruate, you’re not fertile because you’re not ovulating. Further, the testosterone that your estrogen is being converted into causes facial hair and acne.

To treat PCOS we look at the hormones with the Dutch Analytic test—a urine sample test—showing us how much estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone the body is actually producing. But to treat PCOS, weight loss plays a big part. PCOS is also related to insulin resistance and can lead to diabetes as well. High estrogen and insulin resistance are like cousins.

*Health&Healing: Is there a special role that genetics play in dealing with toxicity?*

**LEA LOTT:** There’s a whole portion of genetics called epigenetics, basically a fancy word for saying how the environment is affecting your genes. For example, having a genetic predisposition for a certain disease or problem, doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll have that problem. But it’s clear that environmental factors—including toxins—play a role in “turning on” such genes. And it’s also clear that the presence of certain gene markers influences how patients respond to treatments and medications. So genetic information plays a very important role in designing healing programs for our patients—in particular for cancer, weight gain, and weight loss. **H&H**

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