



The Era Of Functional Medicine Is Here: Are You Ready To Lead Your Community?

by Dr. Bill Hemmer

Modern U.S. healthcare is a mess. Ask any person you meet, and you'll hear story after story about medical premium nightmares, mayhem, and unhappiness. In 2016, *The Commonwealth Fund* ranked the American healthcare system dead last compared to 10 other developed countries. We ranked the worst in efficiency, equity of care, costs related to problems and healthy lives. Instead of merely shaking our heads in disgust, we need a plan to fix the problem.

I believe chiropractic has an excellent opportunity to be the answer to our healthcare crisis. We can address the 4 worst areas of allopathic medical healthcare and help make them significantly better. Our training allows us to be efficient, treat all types of patients, keep costs low, and promote healthy living like no other healthcare provider.

As new primary healthcare providers the largest problem we face will be adopting the new Functional Medicine paradigm to fit our practices. Functional Medicine bridges the gap between what the healthcare public has known for the last 100 years (drugs, surgery, and rescue measures) and learning to take responsibility for their health (using attitude, whole food nutrition, movement, and healthy lifestyle behaviors).

As the new Direct Primary Care providers we must assume the attitude of leaders of health creation in our communities. To become true leaders we need to recognize what it takes to lead, and then live and build our tribes within our communities. In their book, *Tribal Leadership, Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*, Logan, King, and Fischer-Wright provide a compelling outline of how to do just that.

This book categorizes people into 5 Stages of tribal development. In Stage 1 "Life sucks." Nothing in a person's

life is worth anything. In Stage 2 "Their life sucks." Some people have a good life but they themselves don't. In Stage 3 "They are great and nobody else is as great as they are" is their mantra. This is where most people get stuck. About 50 percent of businesses are in Stage 3. These people know they work really hard and nobody else, in their opinion, is working as hard as they do.

Stage 4 is where things get exciting. People in Stage 4 think "We are great and they are not." These people come together and have a higher purpose as a group, and work together to make their world a better place through innovation, creativity and hard work. The biggest difference between Stage 3 and Stage 4 is that people will give the group credit for accomplishments instead of taking credit for themselves. Finally, Stage 5 is characterized as "Life is great." Everything in all areas of life is awesome and nothing brings you down. At Stage 5 monumental changes occur in history. However, it's almost impossible for a group to remain in Stage 5 for any length of time.

To be the leader of Functional Medicine in your community, you must first identify where each member of your current staff is within the 5 Stages. Then, over time, you must attempt to raise your collective office group to Stage 4. Once your office resonates at Stage 4, you and your staff will be taking responsibility for the health of the group and the health of everyone within the group, and this will change the energy within the office.

To start the process of ascending to a Stage 4 group, you need to have a meeting with your entire staff. At this meeting, everyone makes a list of the 3 core values each person holds dear. Then, combining all of the individual lists, a collective list is adopted. Next, each person writes down their "Noble Cause." Noble Causes are the big ideas people become passionate about

and are willing to work towards and accomplish in their lifetime, e.g. "Stopping The Progression Of Chronic Disease By Teaching Others To Take Care Of Themselves."

During the meeting with our staff, a lively discussion arose, and our group decided that our Noble Cause was "Building A Community Of Healthy Lifestyle Teachers To Stop Chronic Disease In Our Lifetime." Once we decided on our mission, it was time to assess what tools we had already available, and what tools we needed to create to fulfill our mission.

Our first task was to define the exact outcomes to measure in order to ensure that we were progressing in our mission, because you can't manage what you can't measure. Our 3 outcomes were based on feeling better, looking better, and living longer. Each of these measures would be part of the ongoing education of our patients. To understand what was working and what wasn't, we used online surveys to measure how we

were doing with our educational process; we could then make corrections based on their feedback.

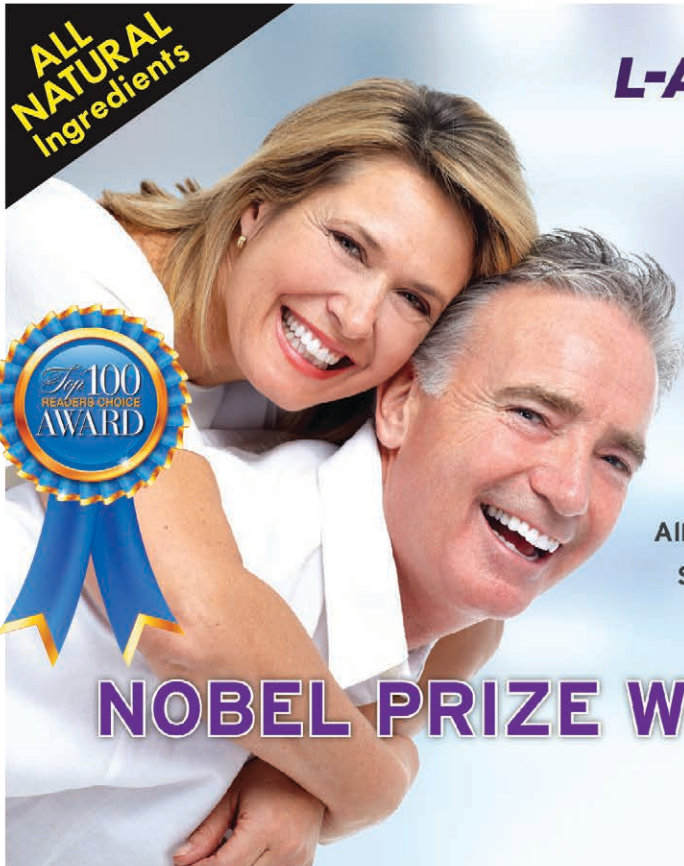
Our next task was to identify the assets we had available to produce the outcome we wanted. We discovered that we weren't using many of our assets to their full capacity, e.g. our use of the Internet to further client education was not at all effective. We weren't providing the groundwork necessary for people to take control of their own health creation – a big discovery for all of us.

Our final task was for each person to consistently act in a way that produced the healthy lifestyle outcomes we had all identified throughout this entire process. Each person's behavior must support everything we believe in (our core values), and they must work towards accomplishing our Noble Cause within each of us. We have monthly meetings to assess how we're doing, and we take corrective actions when necessary to keep one another on track.

To become a leader, you must start with your own passion. If your passion is to become the Functional Medicine leader in your community, I have described the steps to start that process. Chiropractors are ideally positioned to provide the alternative to our current medical system which has proven not to work for today's society. This is a call to action. We've been the leaders of healthy lifestyle creation for decades. And because our clients really don't understand how we can add Functional Medicine to our tools and become the Direct Primary Care providers of the future, it's time to show them how. It is time for us to take our rightful place in the U.S. healthcare system. No other profession is better suited to accept the role than chiropractic, but we need leaders. Are you going to be one of them?

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