

An Interview with Greg Fitzgerald, D.O., D.C., N.D.

by Mark Huberman

Dr. Greg Fitzgerald is a registered osteopath and chiropractor, as well as a three-year, full-time trained naturopath. He is the founder and principal of the “Health for Life Centre” in Sydney, Australia, and has been in practice since 1983. Greg is a prolific speaker, having run seminars in Australia, many with the late Dr. Alec Burton, since 1984. He and his wife, Dawn, run the successful seminar series and online email health program, “21 Days to Transform Your Health,” which is available by contacting them at info@healthforlife.com.au. Visit Dr. Fitzgerald’s website at healthforlife.com.au or call 6 02 95401962.



What led you to Natural Hygiene, and how did you become a Hygienic physician?

My journey really commenced in my twenties when I became interested in health. I had been a high school teacher for about six years, teaching English and history, when I first encountered a number of the health-food movement “authorities,” including Paavo Airola, Adele Davis, and Gaylord Hauser. But I soon discovered that they were spreading more untruths than truths. However, I liked what they were trying to do and realized I wanted to make this my profession. I entered naturopathy school for three years and then obtained a dual qualification in chiropractic and osteopathic medicine, which gave me a broad-based medical education.

What in particular steered you toward Natural Hygiene?

I consider myself to have been truly blessed in this life, in that the dean of the college of osteopathy I attended was none other than Dr. Alec Burton. As soon as I saw him on stage, over 35 years ago, I was profoundly impacted by his erudition, wisdom, and humor. He was, quite liter-

ally, the whole package. He knew his stuff and it resonated with me. I was driven to learn more about this particular philosophy and way of life.

I not only had the privilege of studying under Dr. Burton, but after graduating, I made a point to visit him regularly at his clinic at Arcadia. I saw him monitor his in-house fasting patients and would pester him with question after question, which he always graciously answered. Of course, he also introduced me to the works of Dr. Herbert Shelton, who was a prodigious writer, which fit right in with me being a prodigious reader.

Believe it or not, I have read nearly all of Dr. Shelton’s

works, and most other Hygienic works, from Jennings to Trall to Tilden. I can never forget what Dr. Shelton said prior to his death in 1985, about the then-current crop of naturopaths: “Naturopaths do not cure any more people than medical doctors—they just kill them less often.” And that really impacted me because most currently trained naturopaths have a similar philosophy as medical doctors: they both look at illness as an enemy to be combatted by supplements, homeopathic



Mark Huberman, President of the NHA, interviews Dr. Greg Fitzgerald.

medicines, Bach flower remedies, you name it. But, like medical doctors, most naturopaths fail to address the real cause of illness, which is toxemia, and that's where I found that Natural Hygiene separates itself from every other modality.

What Shelton was saying is that there are no cures, either from modern medicine's chemical laboratory or a naturopath's herbal, vitamin, or homeopathic dispensary. The term "cure" is a medical term where an external agent is taken that hopefully "fixes" the person's illness. In reality, the cure lies within the body and its self-healing power. This, of course, relies on the causes of disease being removed and the conditions of health supplied. The body then moves spontaneously into a healthier state.

The body's imbalances (illnesses) are healed from within, not from extraneous agents. Shelton was also saying that the "remedies" naturopaths rely on are less toxic than traditional medicine's drugs and, therefore, have fewer side-effects and resultant deaths. In short, my many years with Dr. Burton, and my extensive reading of Dr. Shelton's writings, paved a very smooth road for me to become a Hygienic physician.

Having been a leader of the Natural Hygiene health scene for over three decades, I wonder what you make of the relatively recent attention that has been given to the whole-food, plant-based health movement. Are you amazed at how long ago the Natural Hygienists and founders of the NHA—like Shelton, Esser, Benesh, Burton, Scott, and Gross—were so far ahead of the game?

Absolutely! We must never lose track of those giants who led the way—and all without the studies and data we have today. The powerful truth remains that the basic philosophy of Natural Hygiene has not changed in over one-hundred years. There have been some refinements (especially in nutrition) and more factual information has been added, but the overall philosophy that we teach is the same:

1. That health results through healthful living,
2. That we are responsible for our actions,
3. The concept of enervation (a loss of vital force or nerve depletion),
4. The idea of toxemia,
5. The concept of acute disease being "an eviction notice" and not caused by germs, and
6. The concept of chronic disease being a "storage disease" resulting from prolonged biological violations.

All of these ideas, and the consequent Hygienic advice and direction, result in far better health outcomes than any other philosophy. The Hygienic philosophy and its appli-

cation by lifestyle reform is based on fundamental truths.

From my experience, there are some Shelton concepts that time and science have not sustained within the Natural Hygiene movement, including food combining and that babies should be born in the spring. What are your thoughts about these?

I agree that nutritional science has not sustained the principle of food combining. However, I do think that food combining is a refinement that can be useful in someone with food sensitivities. There is an old expression that "big doors swing on little hinges," and in those situations some people might utilize the principles of food combining to good effect, like separating certain foods, such as starches and fruits. I know my wife Dawn only eats fruit by itself, otherwise she gets a little bloated. But I have not seen where this has been scientifically proven. And as for Shelton's idea that babies should only be born at certain times of the year, this does not have any scientific support.

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Let's talk about what is clearly the most unique and championed aspect of the Natural Hygiene health program, and that is water-only fasting. What has been your experience with the practice?

I have fasted myself many times, and two of those times for 28 days. My wife Dawn has fasted for 17 days, and two of our three children have fasted for 7 days. I have fasted hundreds of people over the last 35 years and sent literally thousands to Dr. Burton's Arcadia Health Clinic, where they fasted under his expert supervision, the vast majority with great and powerful success.

In fact, I recently fasted a 45-year-old woman with severe Crohn's disease, of which she had suffered for over 20 years, and she made a full recovery. I currently run only an outpatient clinic in southern Sydney, so this woman underwent a 21-day fast in her home but under my supervision. She lived near me, so I could go to her house every day and do a urine check and a blood check, and take her weight and blood pressure, after which she went onto vegetable broths, fruits, vegetables, soups, and so on. Two months after breaking the fast, she's in remarkable health. She's going gangbusters and her whole family has been converted!

What is the importance of fasting under supervision? Why can't people fast at home since it is, arguably, such a natural and healthy process?

Fasting itself is a very natural and healthy process, but then we complicate it by being human beings. Fasting at home is fraught with difficulty, problems, and potential reactions that only an experienced clinician is trained to

deal with. For one, relatives and friends can be a complicating problem by placing doubt into the minds of fasters. That can really impede the progress of a fast. Another big advantage to fasting under supervision is that you're generally with other patients, which creates a very supportive environment. Also, a fasting patient often experiences some unpleasant symptoms, which without the experience and wisdom of a trained Hygienic practitioner, could result in the premature ending of a fast.

Does the old Hygienic rule of thumb still apply, that no one should fast more than three to five days on their own?

Yes, generally it does, but even a three- to five-day fast can give rise to symptoms and signs that ideally need the interpretation of a practitioner who is skilled in Natural Hygiene and fasting. I was talking to a lady at the NHA conference recently who had been off of caffeine for two days. She had to leave early from the lectures because she had a splitting headache. She thought maybe it was from the food, but I said, no, it's not the food, it's the toxic withdrawal from caffeine, similar to the "toxic hunger" symptoms so beautifully explained by Dr. Joel Fuhrman in many of his books. This type of thing can also happen in a three- to five-day fast, where you come off these things and all of a sudden, you've got leg pain, restless leg syndrome, low back pain, a splitting headache, and/or even vomiting. A short fast can often elicit the most aggressive detoxification symptoms. This is the intelligent expulsion of toxic residues by the body.

What is the power of fasting?

I could talk on that for an hour! Water fasting is the greatest detoxifier known to man. During the physiological rest that accompanies fasting, you're not exercising, so you're resting your musculoskeletal system. You're not going to work, so you're resting your brain and nervous system. You are not engaging in sexual activity, so you're conserving energy. You're not eating anything, so you're resting your digestive organs. All that valuable internal energy is being conserved, which can then be used by the body to clean and heal itself; repair broken DNA; break down cysts, kidney, and gall stones and growths; resorb plaque from arteries; and so on.



Dr. Greg Fitzgerald with his wife Dawn at the recent NHA Conference.

"Water fasting is the greatest detoxifier known to man."

How does the body know when and where to marshal its healing powers? How does the body know that a damaged kidney needs repairing, or a tumor in the lung needs shrinking, or gout in the foot needs resolving?

The body has intelligent direction to appropriate energy wherever it's needed. You know the old saying, "When the tide rises, all the boats lift." So, when the internal energy rises in the body, all of the boats lift, which means that all of the organs start to improve. While you may see more noticeable improvement in some areas, where symptoms are most acute, there will, neverthe-

less, be benefits in all areas.

In your three decades of experience, what medical conditions have you seen respond most effectively and powerfully to supervised water fasting?

Most benign conditions, such as tonsillitis, appendicitis, and other acute inflammatory conditions, respond very well to fasting. It is worth noting that Dr. Russell Trall was fasting people 150 years ago with even more serious conditions, such as cholera and typhoid, and with not one fatality! He was actually asked to give a talk to his medical colleagues at the Smithsonian Institute in 1862 about his success and Hygienic philosophy, the transcript of which was made into a book titled *The True Healing Art*.

Trall's critical observations of the medical drugging method are just as accurate today as in 1862, but few lessons have been learned. Of course, when we focus on chronic conditions, such as autoimmune illnesses, such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, and Crohn's disease, the success is also very high but more variable due to many unique factors, including the duration of disease, medication history, co-morbidities, post-fasting nutritional compliance, general health and vitality, and so on.

I have witnessed amazing things. Kidney and gall stones have dissolved; benign cysts, growths and tumors have shrunk and sometimes completely disappear; facial paralysis has healed completely; and hypertension, anemia, insulin-resistance, adult-onset diabetes, and many other conditions have resolved completely using the intelligent application of water-only fasting, followed by a Hygienic diet and lifestyle. Chronic conditions like these require

much skill, knowledge, and experience on the part of the supervising practitioner.

What about cancers?

When I first met Alec Burton roughly 40 years ago, he would fast nearly everyone, even cancer patients. However, because of the legalities that have become most evident over the last 25 years, you've got to be very careful treating cancer because it is not just an illness, it's an industry, and one that is very well protected by the powers that make the most profit from it, including drug companies, doctors, and the medical profession itself. And all of them are backed by the government. But I have no doubt that if we did not have legal impediments, much of the cancers could be improved and often reversed through fasting. In Australia, where I live, we have some of the most draconian legislation in the world when it comes to health freedom, and cancer is only allowed, by law, to be treated by medical doctors.

In recent times, Dr. Valter Longo, who is the director of the Longevity Institute at USC in California and the Program on Longevity and Cancer at IFOM, a cancer research institute, in Milan, has been getting impressive outcomes in cancer patients by combining intermittent fasting with chemotherapy. He has chronicled some of this data in his recent book, *The Longevity Diet*.

I recall the late Drs. Shelton and Benesh always observing that people die every day in hospitals and no one complains. But let one person die during a water fast and that supervising physician better be prepared.

Yes! We've got to be on guard because we aren't protected by the government. Doctors are protected by the government and their own medical profession. Of course, I'm not against the medical profession, per se, but they are the third-leading cause of death in the world. And this is not just my opinion, this is coming from the *British Medical Journal*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

In times of old, Natural Hygienists would often say, "All drugs are poison" and "You never want to go to a hospital." But there is a place for both medications and hospitals, is there not?

Absolutely! I don't know of any Hygienists back in the day who ever said that medicine is all evil; even Burton and Shelton said there is a place for certain reconstructive and specialized surgeries. Medicine has not advanced on a whim. There are some amazing things in modern medicine. The emergency departments in hospitals do magnificent

repairs every day in situations that have a medical urgency. And certain drugs on occasion can certainly be lifesaving. I certainly would not like to undergo surgery without anesthetic!

However, it is a fact that we are drowning in drugs and all drugs are indeed poisons with adverse events, some of which are fatal. They should be used as a last resort except in emergency, life-saving situations. I would rather have a person alive on compromise than dead on principle! And it must be remembered that drugs never remove causes, nor do they promote health. The first question people should ask is, what can I do to help myself? What causes can I remove that actually build disease in my body? And that's where Natural Hygiene comes in.

But when you do have to go to the hospital, the anxiety is that once you have the procedure, then what? We know that hospitals are not the place to eat or recover, and you just want to go home as soon as possible.

That's true. Hospitals are dangerous places. Tens of thousands of people die every year in American hospitals from the side-effects of treatments and infections, and this does not include prescription errors and other mistakes. The less time in hospitals, the better.

When any of my close friends or family find themselves in a hospital, we bring them nutritious, plant-based, whole food, because when you combine surgery, post-surgery medications, and hospital food, it's a triple insult. There is also a place for fasting after leaving a hospital for many, many conditions. Not long ago, in a report by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, it was stated that 25 to 30% of patients in ICU developed brain damage, ranging from very mild to moderate, irrespective of age, probably due to the heavy sedation. Hygienic care post-surgery is absolutely necessary for maximum health recovery, and this could include fasting. Additionally, in many cases fasting can obviate the need for surgery in the first place if implemented early enough, notwithstanding emergency situations, of course.

Are you continually amazed by the perpetual lack of awareness on the part of hospitals, nurses, and physicians over the importance of nutrition in healing or hindering recovery?

Yes, and I'm almost lost for words because it is so commonsensical. It is also amazing that they don't even seem to understand the body's need for rest. I get patients telling me that at two in the morning they must wake up to take a medication, which happens to be the period when the most healing occurs. This is ridiculous! We need to look at health from all angles, not just nutrition. Give the poor person rest

and sleep and put them in the sun for a short time. Open the window and give them some fresh air. My goodness, it almost appears that hospitals are designed to get people to come back within six months or even earlier! This is why there's such a high readmission rate. In Australia we have the common scenario where a patient, following heart surgery, wakes up to a hospital breakfast of bacon and eggs, white bread and butter, processed fruit juice, and coffee with milk and artificial sweetener. Talk about the blind leading the blind! It would be funny if it wasn't so tragic.



Dr. Joel Fuhrman and Dr. Greg Fitzgerald at the NHA Conference, on their way to play tennis.

What is your opinion on including nuts and avocados as part of a healthy diet? My recollection was that Drs. Shelton, Benesh, Esser, and the early Hygienists were proponents of them, but some today urge that they should be kept to a minimum. Where do you come down on this issue?

I must say that I think these are very minor differences that people make much too much of. I personally am in favor of a reasonably high-fat diet coming from plant foods such as nuts, seeds, and avocados, and see no harm in most cases. This must be modified in certain cases, however, such as for those with severe vascular disease and those who are very overweight. I've got three magnificently healthy adult children that were raised this way. We eat avocados, nuts, and seeds regularly, and consider them an important part of our diet.

So, you do think these are minor issues?

Yes, especially when we're talking about people with poor health on the standard American diet (SAD). Dr. John McDougall promotes a starch-based vegan diet with great success, yet he allows a little bit of salt and a little bit of sugar. Does he say to eat a lot of it? Does he think they're good foods? No, he doesn't, but he allows it because he says he wants people to get off their beef burgers, milkshakes, alcohol, coffee, cream, and cheeses, and when they do so, these are important steps forward.

Dr. Joel Fuhrman promotes a vegetable-based nutritarian diet and has had outstanding success. He emphasizes

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the “nutritarian” aspect and less the “vegan” aspect, but his nutritarian program is very “veganish.” We can argue all this, but I think the fundamental thing is there's a lot of people out there doing a lot of good work. We might differ in some areas, but hey, let's not pick each other apart and destroy ourselves from within. There is a tsunami of very sick people out there who need to make fundamental changes.

Tell me about your practice in Australia. What kind of programs do you offer?

Dawn and I run an outpatient center in Sydney, Australia, called “Health For Life.” We have operated it for decades, and it is where patients come to see me on a consultative basis. In my capacity as a chiropractor or an osteopath, I see many musculoskeletal problems, chronic back and neck problems, and headaches. As a naturopath, I see a lot of asthma, heart disease, autoimmune diseases, cancer, atrial fibrillation, and more. You name it, we see it.

But whatever the problem, our approach always incorporates the basic principles of Natural Hygiene, such as rest, sleep, restricted eating, fasting, plant-based nutrition, sunshine, fresh air, appropriate activity, mental poise, etc. I remind patients that the chronic back problem they are experiencing, for example, has causes outside my scope of treatment, and only *they* can change those things and expedite their recovery. They are encouraged to become active participants in their recovery and not passive recipients, as happens in many modalities.

Isn't that the core of the Natural Hygiene program—that the best physicians are those that are teaching people how to live, not just curing their disease?

Absolutely! I made that distinction during the question and answer panel at the recent NHA Conference. I warn people not to fall into the curing trap, but to strive for true healing. That's what the Natural Hygiene movement has always been about: the concept of providing the conditions of health and removing the causes of disease, and getting out of the way so the body can heal itself to the best of its ability.

A lot of physicians ask me how I get such good results in my practice. And I will always tell them that due credit must go to the mother that I have been employing in my practice for 35 years now. She works for no payment and never has a day off! I thank her every day because without her I would have no success whatsoever. At this point the practitioners are looking at me with their eyes bulging out like poached eggs, and they ask me if this woman is my wife, Dawn. I say no, it's nothing to do with Dawn. The benevolent mother I'm referring to is Mother Nature!



Emily Fitzgerald at the 2017 NHA Conference, is pictured at left with Mark Huberman and her parents Dr. Greg and Dawn Fitzgerald.

So, this is the second year in a row that you've journeyed halfway around the world to be part of the NHA Conference, something you had not done in 30 years. What prompted you to come back?

When I learned the dates of this year's conference, I said to my wife, I feel like I am coming home and seeing the people that I have a spiritual and philosophical affinity with. In Australia, and in much of the rest of the world, we're as scarce as hen's teeth. I have also come to feel that any friend of the NHA's is a friend of ours.

I also must say, Mark, that you and Wanda do a fantastic job. The NHA Conference we just had in June is the best we've ever attended, and that is saying something.

Thank you! As you look back over your 35 years, what discourages you and what encourages you?

What encourages me is the people I've met during the three to four days I have been at the NHA Conference. I have met wonderful people who are on the journey of seeking the truth and becoming better people, not just healthier people. I get most discouraged from human beings, particularly the political sector. I do sometimes feel discouraged by politicians and by the medical profession that so often has its head in the sand. But that's only temporary, because all I need to do is read some of the old Natural Hygiene literature, even just a couple of chapters, and I find inspiration again. I also find inspiration simply by talking to my wife and other like-minded people at this Conference. That brings my spirit back and reminds me that no one's perfect. We have to nurture our spirit and our attitude just as we nurture our body.

"We have to nurture our spirit and our attitude just as we nurture our body."

again and hear them talk is very inspiring. Joel is having an amazing impact with his tireless work, and Dr. Goldhamer has developed the largest fasting establishment in the world; he is truly holding the torch high. And now we have Drs. Joanna and Asa Frey, and Dr. Anthony Lim. My heart gladdens and warms seeing this. In fact, I've heard Natural Hygiene mentioned more this weekend than I've heard it in the last 20 years! I think Alec Burton is smiling way up there amongst the clouds.

Finally, what do you do when you're not lecturing on Natural Hygiene or taking care of patients?

I'm very active and have a broad range of interests. I love to play tennis and golf, but I also enjoy walking and gardening. I meditate and am an avid reader and lover of all kinds of music. And speaking of tennis, one of the highlights of my trip last year was challenging Joel Fuhrman to a tennis match (he won!). This year we added Anthony Lim to the tennis challenge—and he beat both of us! I've christened the inaugural match in 2017 between Joel and me the "FuhFitz Cup." I'm looking forward to next year already!

You sound like a Man for all Seasons!

You've got to live life fully! Hygiene is not simply about health, it's about living; and if you just follow a good diet and look after yourself for health reasons, you are missing the boat. The good health we all work for—weather we're regaining it or maintaining it—is simply a platform to launch ourselves into LIFE!

Dr. Burton always taught me that fasting is important, diet is important, exercise is important, and our attitude is important, but most of all, it's important to never overlook why we are doing all of this in the first place: So we can "suck the marrow from life" and live the best life we can!

Amen! 

What do you think of the physicians that are now carrying the torch first held by Shelton, Burton, Sidhwa, Benesh, and Esser?

I think they're fantastic! It's been a privilege and a pleasure to speak on the same stage with them and to get to know them. I first met Frank Sabatino, Alan Goldhamer, and Joel Fuhrman 30 years ago when Dawn and I attended the 1988 and 1989 conferences. To see them