

Orthomolecular, Nutritional and EPA Therapy: A Winning Combination in the Treatment of Schizophrenia: A Parent's Testimonial

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How a ship finds its way across the heaving ocean. Proverbs 30: 18,19

Introduction

This testimonial summarizes the all too common journey that, for us as parents, must surely be travelled for our sons and daughters who have been struck down by the debilitating brain disease, schizophrenia.

Instinctively knowing that the institutionalizing alternatives presented to us by the traditional medical community were not acceptable, our alternative therapy journey began in support of our son. With the discovery of orthomolecular and nutritional therapy, including the introduction of EPA (Kirunal®), we knew, as did our son, that our search for a quality life long solution had been found.

This Disease Affects the Whole Family

There was an alternative treatment for our son who came down with schizophrenia. With proper nutrition, a slow reduction of traditional medications, orthomolecular doses of vitamins, EPA and the correct tests, our son was given a better chance to get well. He also had to have the will to get well and we as parents had to have the combined strength to help our son. One of the most important ingredients was that we were blessed to have the right orthomolecular doctor. We were one of the families who found the best resources and methods from which to conquer schizophrenia. Since March of 1997 our whole family has been faced with this devastating disease. Our son's first breakdown occurred just three months before graduating from high school. It not only turned our son's life upside down, it also

impacted our whole family. From the moment our son had his breakdown it has become our passion to learn as much about this disease as possible. I would do the extensive research and analysis and then brainstorm my findings with my husband at the end of his regular workday. Together we have learned and grown significantly.

Prior to our son's break, I did not want to know any thing about this disease as my older sister was a chronically ill and hospitalized schizophrenic. My memories of her include her kidnapping me while very young. For six years I lived with her husband and child away from the rest of my family. Many years later her ultimate death as a chronic schizophrenic in an institution closed that chapter of my life. When I finally found my way home as a young girl I wanted nothing to do with her or her illness. I am sure that I am just one person out of millions who has an incredible story to tell. However, this story is not about me, it's about our son. Because my sister suffered in a mental institution I was given the insight to know that our son was not going to follow her path. I saw what long term treatment with "tranquillizing" medication did to my sister. It turned her into a zombie. It broke my heart to see her suffer in the hands of medical doctors who only practised with medication. In those days, and still in the year 2001, most doctors still use traditional medication-based therapies only. This we know from experience.

There is still not enough information available to educate the public and properly inform doctors that there is an alternative treatment that gives people a better chance to lead happier and healthier lives. When our son became ill, I searched for an alternative answer, even though I did not

know what I would find. I was fortunate to have the right people to guide me in the right direction. I was also very blessed because my husband, whose late father had been a pharmacist for over 30 years, joined my efforts as I reviewed with him all that I had learned.

The Perfect Family

Our son does not like the word schizophrenia, thanks to Eugene Bleuler. He would rather it be named “adrenolutin poisoning,” a term that Abram Hoffer, M.D., Ph.D. has also utilized. My husband and I were the “Leave It To Beaver” type family. Most of the kids who came to play with our children always told us that they wished they had parents like us. They could tell that our family was very close. We loved our children and were very involved with their lives while they were growing. I was fortunate to be able to stay home with them. I was involved with our daughter’s activities and my husband was the coach for our son’s baseball teams throughout his childhood. We were a very healthy family and never in our wildest dreams did we think that one of our family members would come down with such an incredible illness. So, we ate the typical modern American diet never thinking twice about it. Every weekend I baked cookies and pies because I thought that I was doing a great thing for my little family. I also bought ice cream regularly. We were a happy family and truly did not have major problems. We could eat anything we wanted and we were all very healthy, so we thought. Little did I know that I was harming our son and ourselves, too. When I look back at our son’s early years in kindergarten I recall one particular situation that could have been a clue to what was in store for our son many years later. We were told by a kindergarten teacher that he was not able to learn very well and that he should be placed in a special education class. Although we acknowledged that our son was developing in some

areas more slowly than other children his age, we did not enrol him in the school’s special education program because of the stigma attached to it. Being proactive, we identified a private special learning center that would effectively get him to the expected learning level. I took him to the center twice a week for a year and he improved tremendously. It was never again necessary nor suggested to us by the school that he should participate in one of their special education classes. Looking back on our son’s childhood, it is bewildering that our traditional support institutions (education and health care system) had no clue as to what type of disease we were facing.

The Beginning Stages

In the fall of 1996 everything was proceeding quite normally. Our son had a great sense of humour, had quite a few friends and was well liked by his teachers. He was just an all-round good kid (in his youth he was an all-star little league baseball player). He had a job and with that he could afford a car. He had a girlfriend and enjoyed life. As time went by, he started to complain about his body being “out of balance.” He expressed an interest in the family obtaining a weight machine for our garage so that his father and he could work out at home together. Once installed he became obsessed with exercising each and every day. We later found out that exercising for him was likely therapeutic in counteracting the chemical imbalance that had already started in his brain.

Prior to this, there had been no real indications that there were any problems with him physically other than with his breathing and running when he would play soccer. He used to tell us that his lungs hurt, which also caused him to have problems running. For him, playing soccer was not in the cards. During this period of time his grades began slipping in a few critical classes to the level that he was no longer eligible for the baseball team. He then

started to withdraw from his friends along with quitting his job and giving up being able to drive his car. When we spoke with him about all of this, his decisions all seemed so logical. He wanted to focus on his schoolwork as this had always been important to him. Little did we know that his world was slowly imploding. During this period I had to drive him to school. This was especially difficult because he was so tired, making it hard for me to wake him up. He also became very moody, which made it unpleasant and disturbing for me to be with him. To many parents, this might seem pretty typical of a teenager. However, the beginning stages of this disease were slowly taking our son away from the world and from us, and we had no clue. Our feelings of guilt were eased after reading the book co-authored by Abram Hoffer and Humphry Osmond, titled *How To Live With Schizophrenia*. The following excerpts are quoted from his book:

“The first and most easily detectable change in adolescent schizophrenic’s will be in their performance in school. There will be an unaccountable downward drift of grades. The second major early change is unaccountable fatigue. The student will complain continually that they are tired, will sleep much more than normal, and will not awake refreshed from their sleep. There may be increasing shyness, moodiness and an increasing reluctance to take part in normal social activities. Behavior becomes unpredictable. The sick child and the family are often only too ready to find some convenient reason for this altered outlook.” (pp 135-137)

We fit the mold perfectly, because we were always trying to find a good reason as to why he was behaving the way he did. My husband even tried desperately to help our son with his schoolwork and only a week before his first breakdown he started to laugh uncontrollably and apologized to his dad. Our son thought that maybe he was experiencing something with his hormones.

So we agreed. But we now know better. Sadly to say, our son had to get really ill in order for us to know that he was in serious trouble. Unfortunately, our traditional doctor in California didn’t have a clue that these symptoms were a direct link to schizophrenia, or “Adrenolutin Poisoning.”

Hospitalization and Treatment

His first breakdown in February, 1997, happened three months before graduating from high school. The day before his breakdown he surprised us and went to a party with his friends. He left us a message on the recorder telling us that he was going to stay overnight at a friend’s home. The next morning he came home and looked very tired. He looked at me and told me that he was going to go to sleep. Later that afternoon, I found him sitting on the floor in the corner of the living room with two baseball bats. One was beside him and the other was in his hand. He was bouncing it on his head. There was never a time when I had seen him behave in a way that would make me think that he had some kind of a mental problem. I was in a state of shock and asked him why he was hurting himself. He did not look at me. Rather, he told me that he thought his friend was going to kill him. That really scared me because I thought that maybe his friend was in fact going to hurt him. I had no idea that he was delusional. One of his friend’s father was a psychologist and, after briefly looking at him, he told me to take him to the emergency room right away. Our family was terrified because we did not know what was causing him to behave that way. He was very tired, delusional and scared. When we finally got a hold of his dad on the phone (he was visiting his brother out of town) our son told him that he was scared and wanted to know what was wrong with him.

After staying at the hospital for a number of hours, the doctor told me that they were going to have to send him to a mental hospital. Considering the fact that

I was uneducated in this area and certainly not prepared for this kind of news, I had no clue as to why they wanted to send him there. He was taken by ambulance as my daughter and I followed behind in our car. Tears were falling from our faces as we tried to figure out what was wrong. All kinds of ideas came to mind. Our daughter thought that maybe he had tried drugs. I thought that maybe he had been playing the infamous "dungeons and dragons" game. Once admitted we of course had a number of questions for the hospital staff. Unfortunately they were not very informative. We were not prepared for this sudden grief and the hospital staff was not trained to comfort or educate us. To them our son was just another patient to be admitted, monitored, stabilized and ultimately released. To us it was devastating because he was our son and our daughter's brother.

The next morning the hospital staff began their comprehensive process of reviewing our son's case. The social worker brought our son into a room and noted to us his delusional behavior. A few days later after a number of tests had been done, another social worker took me to a private room and told me that our son had schizophrenia and emphasized to me that my husband and I likely would have to have him admitted into a home. He said that we needed to get on with our lives and that he would be better off as a result. I could not believe what he was saying because our son had been a reasonably normal and active child all his life. Now, at the prime of his youth and in just one day, the social worker was ready to throw him away. At that time I did not know that orthomolecular therapy even existed. However, no matter what I was being told he was not going to be following in the footsteps of my sister. So I listened to what the social worker had to say and then told him that he could not have our son.

Then the psychiatrist talked to us and told us that our son was in immediate dan-

ger and he needed medication right away. I refused at first and then my husband told me that we had to do something and that this was the best we could do for now as our goal was to stabilize our son so that he could be released into our care. Because the doctor emphasized to us that it was the only chance he had in order to get rid of the delusions, we had no other choice but to agree. So they tried risperdol. The doctor did not tell us that when they give a patient medication that there could be severe complications and/or side effects. This, of course, is because they never really know how a patient will respond to it. We found out later that we almost lost him because he went into tachycardia. He suffered from muscle cramps in his jaw and buttocks. He later remarked to us that it was the most excruciating pain that he had ever experienced and that he will never forget it. The doctors finally settled on haldol along with other medications to treat the side effects associated with the haldol. Our son experienced blurred vision and the doctors were not concerned with that, as the delusions and other positive symptoms of the disease were under control. He was finally stabilized after thirteen days. However, his doctor would not give our son or us a date for his release. Our son started to become anxious as he thought that they were going to keep him in the hospital indefinitely. Both my husband and I overheard the nurse requesting to increase his medication because of his frequent inquiries about being released. We knew that she was getting tired of him because he kept asking her when would they let him go home. We were shocked to hear her request of the doctor to increase his medication. We soon lost faith in the system. He became more tranquilized and worried that he was never coming home. We were worried and very frustrated too. The doctors were not happy with us because we told them that we were going to seek an alternative method for treating our son. We

were insistent on obtaining his release and finally his doctor reluctantly agreed. We had to sign a paper absolving them of any liability as they were releasing him to us against their medical judgment. We gladly signed the waiver. The doctor was so angry that she hung up on my husband. Our son was finally released on April 1, 1997, April Fool's Day. I suppose that they thought we were making a big mistake as they had told us that there were no known alternative treatments for this disease.

Finally Back Home

Our son was happy to come home even though he was experiencing so many problems with the haldol. After being home he complained that his neck and jaw hurt from the medication. So the doctor prescribed clonazepam to help relieve his muscle pain in the neck and jaw. He then had bowel pain from the clonazepam, so the doctor gave him cogentin. This in turn made him very drowsy so that he could do nothing. I could see the whole picture now. I was having flashbacks of my sisters sad, medicated and institutionalized life. My son was now very heavily medicated and sleeping all the time. He needed me for almost every thing as he was unable to do much for himself. His whole concept of time was irrelevant. Although the medicine made him feel sick he needed to take it as he would suffer from the delusions and hallucinations, a real catch 22. Even though he was taking his medication he was afraid to sleep in his room. So he slept in our room.

One day I cried as I told my best friend about my son's pain. She told me that her sister might know of a doctor who would be able to help. This doctor had experience in orthomolecular medicine. We contacted him and he told us that he would see us once only because he was very busy.

Our son was able to resume his required high school classes as the school had a home tutor that was available. We are so

proud of his accomplishment of graduating from high school while going through such a traumatic illness.

On the Right Track

We were finally on the right track. The doctor put him on large doses of niacin and a few other vitamins. Our son said that he had not experienced deep breathing like that ever before. The niacin really helped. He was still having horrible side effects from the medication. We called the doctor and told him that we were desperately in trouble and did not know what to do to help our son as we had not yet found another orthomolecular doctor. He told us that, if we wanted to, we could take him off of the medication as that decision was completely up to us. We did take him off his medications immediately. Our son started to feel better after going off the medication. Within a short period of time he was able to get a part time job and he was driving again. At this point we were without an orthomolecular doctor and very worried. Our traditional doctor through our group insurance certainly was not supportive of any alternative therapies. After much research I finally found a doctor in the area, Dr. Martin Mulders, who had some education in orthomolecular therapy so we felt a lot better. He was a great doctor and comforted us a lot. Whenever I identified information about various tests and what I thought was relevant to our son's case, especially if it was from an orthomolecular source such as Carl C. Pfeiffer, he would recognize the information and give our son the test and add to his own knowledge base for this disease.

Unfortunately our son had a second breakdown ten months after his first one in February of 1998. He became delusional and thought that he was someone else. The police had to handcuff him in order to keep him safe because he was pretty agitated and would not go in the car with us. The hospital staff was very kind and allowed us to

continue to give him his vitamins while there. We were lucky in that way but yet sad that our son had to be put in the hospital again. He was very embarrassed and concerned about his reputation because he was handcuffed. We assured him that he was not a criminal. I told him that there was no other way we could have got him in the car safely. He felt better after we reassured him. Sadly to say our son will always have wounds in his heart that we will never be able to erase.

When our son's girlfriend found out about his illness she told him to never call her again. He was already isolated from the world in the hospital and now the cold hard reality was setting in. Society is unaware that people with schizophrenia need love just as someone who has cancer or heart disease. All I could tell him was that we must not be upset with her because our society is not yet educated about this disease. He was wounded and it broke my heart to see him so sad. But he accepted it and has not given up on society. Days later our son told us that the second hospitalization was not as traumatic as the first because he knew more about what was happening, that we would never leave him in the hospital forever.

I tried to educate him as I learned more about the disease so that he would realize that orthomolecular therapy in fact works and that he did have a future. I kept telling him that as long as he was allowed to keep taking his vitamins in the hospital we were safe. We were also lucky because the new doctor in the hospital prescribed for our son Zyprexa rather than haldol, thus not placing him in any immediate danger. The Zyprexa was helping with the "hot" symptoms, but it did not allow him to be able to interact with the world. The doctor in the hospital was not very approachable so it did not make the situation very pleasant. He must have thought that we were idiots for believing in vitamins.

When I called our son's local orthomolecular doctor, Dr. Mulders, I cried and told him that I was frightened. He comforted

me and told me that he wanted us to make an appointment with Dr. Abram Hoffer, as he was well aware of his writings and practice in the area of treating schizophrenia. Little did I know how lucky we were because of this referral to Dr. Hoffer. We will always be grateful to both him and Dr. Mulders for working together on behalf of our son. Being released 11 days later from the hospital, we promptly flew to Victoria, British Columbia, to see Dr. Hoffer in November, 1998. Thanks to him and his caring office assistant, Fran, our son was no longer in danger. He had been provided with our son's complete medical file from Dr. Mulders prior to our appointment and was therefore well prepared. His comprehensive, efficient methodology of conducting the interview process with our son and us was both focused and refreshing. He made a few adjustments with the vitamins and minerals and we were once again on track. He told us that as our son's body becomes increasingly balanced that we should slowly reduce the levels of his current medications.

Our son was on 10 mg of Zyprexa at this point. We began reducing it by approximately one mg per month for the first few months and more slowly thereafter. By March, 1999, his medication had been reduced to 7.5 mg per day and he was becoming increasingly more connected and less tranquilized. He began waking up at 1:00 pm, prior to this he would usually sleep until 4:00 pm). Later that month, he picked up a couple of old friends and brought them to our home to visit. We were very happy to see our son finally want to socialize with others and others to socialize with him. He slowly continued to do more things each and every day. As my husband commented, "Like a computer with new reconfigured software, he was slowly 'rebooting'."

Introduction of EPA

After attending the 29th Annual *Nutritional Medicine Today* Conference in Vancouver with my husband in 2000, our

son began taking EPA (Kirunal®). The lecture given by David Horrobin was most encouraging and exciting, showing how EPA has been found to be so much more effective in treating both the positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia. My husband was intrigued by Horrobin's studies and findings and helped me to understand how it worked. By May, 2000, just six weeks after adding the EPA therapy (2,000 mg per day) to his regular orthomolecular therapy, our son abruptly showed signs of connecting even further than before. He started to read again and said that he wanted to go back to school (the local Junior College). We were amazed. The EPA absolutely accelerated the recovery process in combination with his orthomolecular and nutritional therapy as prescribed by Hoffer.

By January, 2001 our son was feeling much better. At that time he had reduced his medication to 0.30 mg per day. He also was feeling more at peace with his body, although not one hundred percent yet. At that time, our son complained that he felt very anxious and had shown signs of extreme hunger right after eating. He had been experiencing the hunger problem during the prior three weeks. I thought that maybe he had a tapeworm because of his appetite. Our son was of course very concerned because he was not feeling as well as before. So he urged me to take him to the hospital right away. I did, and the emergency room physician did not think that he had a tapeworm. He thought that maybe he was coming down with the flu. The next day he felt better, so we did not make an appointment to see his traditional doctor. In February, 2001 he took 0.30 milligrams of Zyprexa at 6:00 pm as he always does. Two hours later as he was driving to his friend's house to watch a movie he called us and told us that he was not feeling well again. He said that his stomach was feeling sick and he felt a little disoriented. The next morning our daughter, our son, my husband and I were

trying to understand why he was feeling so ill. We went back and forth thinking that maybe he needed more medication, and then we thought that maybe he needed to reduce the medication. Then we thought that maybe he really did have a tapeworm. Our whole family was going through the same anxiety as we have been for the last four years. It is emotionally draining and sometimes it is hard to face a new day.

The Day We Had All Been Waiting For

After talking with our son for hours, something wonderful dawned on me. It was the day our whole family had hoped for. First, I verified with him exactly when he took his medication and when he began feeling sick. He quickly noted that he had taken the medication at 6:00 pm and by 8:00 pm he was feeling ill. The light when on for me and I said to our son "I think that your body and mind are telling you that the Zyprexa is making you ill. I think that today, February 4, 2001, is the day that we have been waiting for, the day that you can finally reduce your medication to 0 mg per day." I told him that he could do what ever he wanted, but I truly thought that he should stop his medication as of today. We ran downstairs and told his father the news. My husband agreed with us after we explained to him our logic. When he agrees, we know that we are usually right! We of course e-mailed Dr. Hoffer with the details and he advised us appropriately and was glad that our son was finally off the medication. We included Dr. Horrobin on our email to Dr. Hoffer and he too was quite pleased with this exciting news. I do not think that our son will suffer another breakdown because he is becoming increasingly alert and connected. He feels 95 percent connected with his body and mind. I am so happy to report that it has been over three years since he had his last breakdown and I do believe that he has finally recovered.

An Incredible and Exciting Journey Awaits our Son

Our son is amazed that most people feel balanced when they are born as he now acknowledges that was not the case for him. It is as if he has a new body and his brain has woken up. He can even breathe better. I believe that the mild anxiety that he is experiencing is due to the medication residue and now that he is off of it completely I believe that he will be feeling better than ever. You would never know by looking at him now that he has ever experienced an "adrenolutin poisoning."

He is driving now. He does not feel inferior around his father because he feels better about himself. He takes care of himself now. He has lost the weight that he gained due to the side effects of the medication. He no longer is afraid to socialize. He has quite a few friends. He cooks. He prepares his own vitamin packets and takes them on schedule. I don't have to remind him any more. He hasn't seen a traditional psychiatrist for almost a year now. He goes shopping with his sister and they are enjoying each other more than ever. He no longer sleeps and lives on the couch. He manages his own finances. He helps his father more than he used to. He is capable of taking care of our house while my husband and I go away from time to time. He has been back in school since October, 2000, taking one class per semester, receiving an A on his pre-algebra class. He has told us that he would like to take two classes next fall (2001). He is discovering the world and his place in it. He is planning to make a beautiful rose garden this spring (2001). He is a very talented and gifted oil painter and many of our friends want him to paint their portraits for them when he feels ready to do so. I must note that his artwork appears to be so real that you can see the emotions of the person in his work. The world is a better place because he is in it. He gives our family so much love.

If only our schools would administer the HOD test and the niacin patch test for our children and tomorrow's leaders. So many people would be helped and potentially spared the pain that so many of us have been through.

I only wish that our society would recognize as heroes our sons and daughters that have battled to overcome the debilitating effects of this disease in the same manner as society recognizes those that overcome cancer or other tragic life changing illnesses or accidents. Unfortunately, however, this disease of the brain is still so misunderstood by society today that even those who have conquered it are not able to share with society their triumph because of the shame that society projects.