

THE PATH TO WELLNESS:
James Mahoney, D.O.,
merges science and
nature in his integrative
approach to medicine.





The Good Doctor

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At his Southlake-based Center for Hope and Healing, James Mahoney, D.O., takes best practices from conventional and holistic medicine to treat everything from weight loss to autism.

MEDICINE IS A TRICKY BUSINESS. Research-based theories and lab-tested results make their way into our doctors' exam rooms and hospitals, and patients are remedied based on historical data and modern discovery. Science is medicine's foundation. Cancer gets chemotherapy. Diabetes gets insulin. Convention is about x-rays and pills and logical sense. This is how most doctors are taught to look at the human body.

Yetsometimes, despitebestefforts, research is wrong. On occasion the

body's systems get stuck. Have an allergic outbreak. React poorly to toxins. Give in to idiosyncrasies that make the eye twitch or the rash spread. This is precisely where James Mahoney, D.O., founder of the Southlake-based Center for Hope and Healing, comes into the waiting room.

Dr. Jay, as he's affectionately known, is a board-certified osteopathic family physician, a discipline oriented toward a holistic philosophy. Since his training days, he's

understood the intense mind-body connection. He's a believer in the way nutrition and exercise impact one's ability to heal, and he's witnessed it firsthand.

While in medical school, Mahoney's father suffered from heart problems, ultimately succumbing to five vessel bypass surgeries. Mahoney says his father didn't believe he was powerless to his situation, which depended on conventional medicine only. So after the surgeries, his father found his own path to health with an overhaul in diet and lifestyle. As a result, he had no further heart problems.

To Mahoney, his dad was the quintessential example of how nutrition can affect a health disorder. "What I learned from my experience is that the medical system was great for what it does, but follow-up, maintenance, and long-term [care] was lacking," he says.

But in the '90s, when Mahoney started his practice, holistic medicine was considered more hippie than Hippocratic. He wasn't shunning convention; rather, he was expanding on it. Integrative holistic medicine, a study of the natural ways in which the body heals, is the place where science and nature converge.

Mahoney believes that the body has the genius and the tendency for health. He runs his Center for Hope and Healing on this belief. He looks to convention for his medical grounding and turns to nature for the rest of the answers. He looks at the way all of the body's major systems function and tests for food allergies and environmental toxins. He asks the patient about his memory, concentration, mood. About daily vitamins and medicines.

The majority of Mahoney's patients are dealing with a hormonal imbalance. These ailments are triggered by a form of stress, which can be defined as anything from an underlying infection to hating one's job. "The whole point of the integrative model, before we [use] medication as a Band-Aid, is to look at the root cause," Mahoney says. "Then we can use the Band-Aid, but you don't want to not deal with the underlying cause."

Finding the underlying cause starts with a web-based assessment called LifeClick. Mahoney and a team of information technology specialists created LifeClick in 2003 using thousands of scientific references. LifeClick users log on to the web site and answer a series of questions that relate to the heart, joints, brain, muscles, eating habits, and more. The software pulls data from scientific sources to

analyze the answers and creates for the patient a customized assessment on recommendations for diet, supplements, exercise, and lifestyle activities. The customized health assessment can be printed out so that patients can use the recommendations if they choose so with any physician. What LifeClick essentially does, in the words of Mahoney, is look at "what's wrong behind the scenes."

When he has all of the data—the whole body picture—he prescribes a wellness plan that incorporates nutrition, supplements, exercise, and stress reducers. And, yes, if the patient needs surgery or pharmaceutical medicine, he advocates it. He just does so having all of the patient's individual biological data.

"I'm lifted higher and higher by conventional knowledge," Mahoney says. "We don't ever want to throw that out. But I don't want people to miss out on what [natural remedy] Omega 3 gives them after their heart surgery. If they do the things they need to do, it shifts the whole milieu."

Shifting the medical landscape describes Mahoney as a doctor and as a businessman. His goal is to help inject integrative medicine into the protocol of traditional medicine by educating doctors who are open to progressive studies. The challenge lies in this fact: most doctors spend 10 years immersed in conventional medicine in school, learning and growing the facets of science that are historically accepted and respected. What past and present doctors learn in medical school does not, Mahoney says, include integrative practices. To help educate his peers, Mahoney makes media appearances, writes books, and attends seminars to speak whenever he can. He's a tireless teacher, and the results are growing.

THE EMPOWERED PATIENT

LifeClick as an assessment, and integrative holistic medicine as a way of life, is successful when predicated on the understanding that it's the patient who wants to take control and go beyond what typical medical care will deliver. It's the patient who has to take the time to go online and answer the exhaustive LifeClick questionnaires. Mahoney says it's the empowered patient who wants to dig deeper to establish a life-long goal of wellness.

He treats patients with all types and degrees of illness. There's the pastor who wants to lose weight and get off blood pressure medicine. There's the

“You have to take responsibility for your own health. You’re the only one who has your set of values.”

—DR. JAMES MAHONEY

fiftysomething dental consultant who needed a so-called tune-up to help prepare for older age. The 35-year-old woman who suffers from intense headaches. The inconsolably tired 44-year-old mother. The child with autism. The patient with fibromyalgia; the other with asthma.

Mahoney has helped people in every one of these scenarios. He’s done it by asking questions, spending hours conversing, and meshing everything he’s learned in medical school with holistic medicine to create an individual game plan for beating the ailment.

One of the most fascinating examples of the power of integrative medicine is how it can help combat autism. Mahoney says integrative medicine is a perfect discipline for autism because changing diet, nutrition, and toxicity levels within the body often can help to treat this mysterious disease.

For his autistic patients, he analyzes body chemistry, drawing blood to chart deficiencies. He looks at brain chemistry. He conducts biologic analysis. And even though autism is a disease that affects many, each person’s makeup is different and therefore they should be treated for the condition uniquely. This is why Mahoney believes integrative medicine is the best hope for treatment: an integrative, holistic approach allows for the small differences in individual body chemistry to explain a bigger picture. He cites the example of two children who both have autism and both have a B-12 deficiency. Child A needs 10,000 milligrams, but Child B needs 25,000 milligrams. The practice of integrative medicine—which focuses on diet, adding nutrition, removing toxins, and treating hormonal imbalances—will allow for biochemical individuality this precise. So rather than a blanket approach to treatment, each patient gets a customized health plan.

There are also those patients who come to integrative holistic medicine because they’ve had a wake-up call to take their health seriously. Alan Bias had his aha moment in the summer of 2007. Weighing nearly 300 pounds, the pastor knew he had to change his life or he’d be a slave to blood pressure medicine and sleep apnea for the rest of his days. Bias attended a seminar at Fort Worth where Mahoney was a speaker, and he says that day was the beginning of his quest for health.

“I walked up to [Dr. Jay] and said, ‘I think you just changed my life today. This is what I’m looking for. I’m going to do this program and lose a bunch of weight ... and we’re going to work together,’” Bias remembers. In the first 14 days of the program, he dropped 20 pounds. He stuck to the prescribed diet, exercise, and nutritional recommendations, and in less than eight months, he’d dropped 100 pounds. He says he “attacked” the program and didn’t let up, which is why his results are so dramatic. Today, Bias no longer needs the blood pressure medicine, nor does he suffer from sleep apnea. In fact, he became such a staunch advocate for Mahoney’s program that he really did go to work for the doctor—as director of operations, a position he’s held since September 2008.

For some patients, integrative medicine can be that boost toward complete wellness. Lisa Jones has been seeing Mahoney for eight years. The 44-year-old mother of five needed help with fatigue and hormonal balance. “I had no answers to why I felt so down,” she says. “I attributed it to being a mom.” She says Mahoney looked at her “as a patient and as a person” and told her she could change her life if she took treatment for adrenal support, used supplements, and changed her diet. Mahoney had also tested Jones for allergies and found she had reactions to milk and eggs, which she consumed daily. In her words, Mahoney “integrated” all of the pieces of the health puzzle.

“I feel like you might go to a conventional doctor and they’d run the blood work,” Jones says. “[Mahoney] brought more to the table. He’s very innovative. I adore him. I think he’s changed all of our lives.”

Patient testimonials aside, Mahoney is fast to point out holistic practices are part of the master plan, and they are not designed to negate traditional medicine or conventional science. They are designed to complement and fill in gaps. It’s a moon in the galaxy of stars.

“What I’ve come to understand,” Mahoney says, “is that I serve a small percentage of the population. Ten to 20 percent of people want to engage in wellness. For people who really want this—the empowered patient—there needs to be a good way to organize and access information. You have to take responsibility for your own health. You’re the only one who has your set of values. The mission of my practice is empowering the world to be well.” **D**