Case 1: Fatigue
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Approximately four months ago, I had the opportunity to consult with a pleasant 52 year woman named Judy.

Judy was suffering with chronic fatigue. Her primary physician's medical records included a CBC and a serum B-12 test. According to her physician, her values were normal.

Let me give you the exact values as noted on Judy's blood test:

- Red Blood Cell: 3.9
- Hemoglobin: 14.3
- Hematocrit: 36.4
- MCV: 87
- MCH: 31.7
- Serum Iron: 131
- Serum B-12: 322

Unfortunately, her physician was unable to identify why she was experiencing periods of debilitating fatigue.

As a practicing physician, let me ask you a few questions and see if you can determine Judy's problem.

1. What is the most obvious diagnosis?
2. What two tests would be wise to order?
3. How would you treat Judy based on the results of these two tests?

1: The most obvious diagnosis would be some form of anemia, however, her physician did order an iron test and was stuck on the fact that her iron levels were well within normal limits.

2: The gold standard to rule out or rule in iron deficiency anemia is Ferritin. The second test I ordered was a urine methylmalonic acid test. This is a highly sensitive test for B-12 deficiency. (read peer reviewed paper supporting this test) See below

Judy's ferritin was 55 and her urine methylmalonic acid test was 3.2 (normal value is 0.4-2.5 µmol/mmol crt). High levels of methylmalonic acid test are indicative of B-12 deficiency.

My working diagnosis was B-12 anemia.
Vitamin B12 anemia is the result of an impaired ability of the digestive tract to absorb the B12 that is a normal part of the diet. B12 is essential for the production of red blood cells, as well as the maintenance of the nervous system, and is found in food of animal origin such as meat, fish and dairy products. There are four (4) causes.

1. Failure of the stomach lining to produce intrinsic factor. Intrinsic factor is a chemical produced by the stomach lining and combined with vitamin B12 in the small intestine. Due to an autoimmune disorder (a disorder caused by a person's own immune system attacking the body's organs and tissues), the production of intrinsic factor is blocked.

2. Removal of small intestine where vitamin B12 is absorbed

3. Crohn’s disease - a chronic inflammatory disease that affects any part of the gastrointestinal tract

4. Eating a vegan diet which excludes eggs, dairy products, meat and fish

Based on this information, I decided to begin a trial of sub-lingual B-12 supplementation.

Within seven days, Judy's fatigue lifted and she commented that she felt like dancing.

How's that for a quick turn-around?

**My Comments:**

As chiropractic physicians we have the unique ability to see *outside* the box. We simply are more keen to wanting to identify the cause of health problems. Unfortunately few traditional medical physicians have this same ability and tend to focus on suppressing symptoms.

With nutritional medicine/functional diagnostic medicine you will soon see that you have the opportunity to help a ton of patients with a variety of hard to treat (and diagnose.. by most traditional MDs) conditions.

If you are like me, you will find it hard to contain yourself as you learn this new form of medicine.

Please feel free to send me your questions. I can be reached at askdrgrisanti@charterinternet.com

**Additional Comment:** This case although appearing to be simplistic did involve some additional detective work to determine why Judy was low in B-12. My goal is to present "real" cases that us doctors of chiropractic can help with. I want to present the basics of the cases and encourage each one of you to consider adding this missing piece of the health equation. Believe me, your practice will never ever be the same once you begin to see how many different health conditions you can turn around.

**References:**


Here is an eye-opening paper published in the 2003 American Academy of Family Physicians. This paper supports the superiority of using methylmalonic acid test over the serum B-12. Although the paper uses a serum methylmalonic acid test, the literature supports the testing of urine methylmalonic acid test.

http://www.aafp.org/afp/20030301/979.html