

Restore Health: Disease Reversal

Mark K. Huntington, MD, PhD

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Author: Joseph E. Scherger, MD

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AUTHOR AFFILIATION:

Center for Family Medicine, Sioux Falls, SD

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

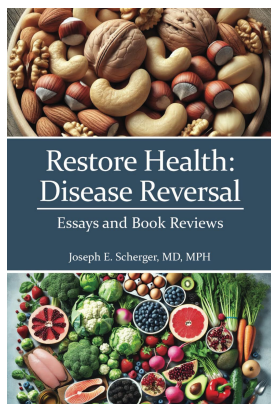
Mark K. Huntington,
mark.huntington@usd.edu

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This book is a self-published sequel to Dr Scherger's earlier volume, *Lean and Fit: A Doctor's Journey to Healthy Nutrition and Greater Wellness*, which is currently in its third edition. The topic of this latest offering is reversing chronic diseases via nutrition and other lifestyle methods and is based on the premise that "almost all chronic diseases are reversible" (p.1). It does not set out to offer original data, rather it is a synthesis of books in the areas of lifestyle, functional, and anti-aging medicine. The author introduces this review of nutritional healing using the term *science-based* (presumably in lieu of *evidence-based*).

"...because a deep understanding of human biology and nutrition is more useful than relying solely on randomized controlled trials (RCTs)... most RCTs are based on a single variable and nutrition is multivariable by nature."

Although the author states that references are available for all the content, the text is not annotated and there is no bibliography included.

The book begins by describing foundational principles for this approach. Six elements of healthy living are explicitly stated: nutrition ("the most important factor"), physical activity, stress management, restorative sleep, a healthy social life, and having meaning and purpose. This is as sound a list as one is likely to encounter anywhere, and a great start to the book. Next, the author offers his categories of chronic disease: (1) diseases of carbohydrate overload, (2) diseases of inflammation and unhealthy gut microbiome, (3) diseases of stress, (4) bones, joints, strength, and balance, (5) chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, (6) cognitive decline and dementia, (7) cancer remission, and (8) anti-aging. These principles are followed by brief essays entitled Nutritional Healing, Carbohydrate Excess and Insulin Resistance, Women Are Different, Inflammatory Foods and Chronic Disease, Time-Restricted Eating, Healthy Nutrition Options, and Reversing Chronic Disease. Part I wraps up with concise reviews of three books related to the topics raised in the individual essays.

The remainder of the book is divided into six additional sections, followed by a brief concluding statement and an appendix. Each of these sections follows a theme, generally one of the chronic disease categories defined in Part I. They consist primarily of reviews of books addressing the section's theme, sometimes accompanied by introductory or summary essays. The Resources appendix offers a list of "superfoods", the author's suggested meal plan, and a list of the dietary supplements the author uses.

This book is a quick and easy read, ideal for contemporary attention spans. It addresses the critically important topic of wellness. Clearly, the author is passionate about healthy lifestyles and nutrition. However, there are several drawbacks.

In reading the subtitle "Essays and Book Reviews," I was expecting to find an anthology of critical book reviews. Instead, what we find is collection of book recommendations. While it is useful as a concise review of what is available in the popular press, it was less helpful in evaluating the validity of the contents of the books being recommended.

When writing about nutrition, it can be difficult to avoid the appearance of commercial bias. Given the plethora of available supplements and the variable composition of each formulation due to lack of standardization between nutraceuticals, discussions often need to include the proprietary names to clarify which formulation the authors' recommendation or caution applies to. This is the case with this book: proprietary compounds and

programs—some quite costly—are specifically recommended. There is also a tendency to cite prominent doctors’ endorsements rather than data: eminence-based rather than evidence-based.

The lack of a separate bibliography is a missed opportunity. Many of the points the author passionately makes came across as “just so” stories; as one equally skeptical of big pharma and the nutraceutical industry, I had hoped for more. When looking for additional information on one topic that sparked special interest, I was able to locate the journal articles upon which the recommended book was based.^{1,2} The papers were low quality and published in a journal generally considered predatory.

The punchline of the book—eat right, sleep right, exercise, manage stress, have a purpose—is spot on! This is a message that everyone should hear, and every family physician should be propagating. Although the book seems designed to further that goal, its utility would have been greatly improved if it employed a more rigorous evidenced-based (rather than “science-based”) approach, offered a more critical analysis of the books discussed, and included a list of references for the major points emphasized. Overall, it might be more at home in a supplement store than a physician’s waiting room.

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