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## PROFILE

**Dr. Rick Linchitz: Defying the Odds**

by Paul Gains



Mortality is not a concept to which serious athletes subscribe. Searching for perfection they pile on the workouts and fearlessly whip themselves into shape. Alas, when their bodies fail the consequences can be catastrophic.

So it was for Dr. Rick Linchitz, a medical doctor who once oversaw a hectic pain management clinic but also succumbed to an extreme obsession with fitness. During a long distance cycling event in northern Italy five years ago, he became ill but believed he was merely suffering a repeat episode of prostatitis caused by long hours in the saddle. It was a damn inconvenience, he'd say. This time however, the pain was accompanied by fever and chills. He shook uncontrollably and he was briefly hospitalized.

Once he was fit to travel, the then 51-year old Linchitz went home to Long Island, New York where an alert doctor ordered a CAT scan on his kidneys and pelvis. That's when radiologists, quite by accident, found a lemon sized tumor on his lower right lung, a discovery that turned his life completely helter skelter. "I had never been sick," he says quietly, "I thought I was healthy as a horse doing triathlons and cycling. I had a spring in my step. People thought of me as a picture of health. It was a big shock! Being an athlete I had this kind of pride in my physical ability for a long time and getting cancer, more than a shock, it was in a way, humiliation. People would come up to me and say they were sorry to hear about it but the next words out of their mouths was 'I can't believe it. You of all people!' I didn't want to face people because I didn't want to hear that anymore."

The medical practice he ran employed 50 people and apart from two hours of furious athletic training and an hour of meditation before bedtime, he totally immersed himself in his work. He ate bites of a sandwich between patients and sat down to read his mail over his first meal of the day—at 8:00 o'clock at night. His wife Rita and their three children hardly saw him.

The doctors told Dr. Linchitz he had broncho—alveolar carcinoma. At the time there was no chemotherapy or radiation therapy available and his only option was radical surgery. As a physician he saw the proverbial cup half empty—he believed he was going to die. Moreover, he also worried about his family and who would provide for them if his life was taken. And then he went under the knife.

The surgeon believed he got all the tumor but even so had ominous words for his reluctant patient. "Sixty percent, five years survival" he announced, rather too perfunctory for Dr. Linchitz's liking.

"He was the caricature of 'the surgeon' completely cold, very analytical. He didn't offer anything, didn't recommend anything," Linchitz remembers. "And my personality is not such that I would sit back and say ok I am going to twiddle my thumbs for five years and wonder whether I am going to live or die."

Empowered with anger and a strong sense of survival Linchitz spent the next 72 hours on the internet learning everything he could about the type of cancer that was threatening his life. Western medicine, he concluded, had failed him and, being rather open minded, he was willing to try anything. In the following months he consulted an acupuncturist, visited a couple of Buddhist monasteries as well as the Chopra Centre in La Jolla, California. In his search, he even rang up a medical psychic. But it was a chance visit to a couples healing workshop in Costa Rica that proved the catalyst for a change in attitude, not to mention lifestyle.

"We were doing poorly as a couple," reveals his wife Rita, "He felt nobody could understand what he was going through. And he was on something of a personal spiritual quest. I felt completely shut out and the kids felt shut out. I couldn't watch the desperation, he was just grasping at life. And we went to this workshop and he immediately changed. Somehow the message got through."

The speaker that day was Satyam Nadeen and his message completely floored the good doctor so much so that he began to think of his life as borrowed time in a universe that is billions of years old.

As he knew about antioxidants but I never really took it seriously as a way of life for myself and I never really approached it fully from a scientific standpoint. I would hear about something and incorporate it into a haphazard supplement regimen," he explains. "But as I started getting more involved in this I started looking at the various companies and which manufacturers had quality products dosages, grades. That's when I started getting into Life Extension products."

Beginning with Life Extension Mix he gradually added other supplements and has now established a daily protocol that appears to be paying dividends. Five years after the devastating news he remains cancer free although he must submit to annual CAT scans.



Some of the products he regularly uses include Life Extension Mix tabs, three tabs 3x/day. Life Extension Booster, 1/day, Chronoforte 3 caps 2x/day, Gamma E with Tocotrienols 1/day, MSM 1 cap 3/day, Curcumin 300 mg 3x/day (for arthritis in his back) Super Green Tea 2 caps 2x/day and CLA 5 caps/day.

The adherence to such a strict regimen is about the only evidence of his once obsessive personality. He has retired from the medical practice to which he was once harnessed. And because he suffered from nerve damage during surgery he is unable to participate in long distance cycling or swimming events where he'd previously fallen victim to overtraining. Rather than become despondent, as many athletes do after a career ending surgery, he has discovered a new and quite remarkable training program designed by a controversial figure named Dr. Irving Dardik.

The theory behind the program runs counter to most athletic training programs in which the heart rate is maintained at a prescribed level for a period of time. Dr. Dardik believes that it's the rest period between activity that ultimately gives the heart rate variability. That is what many experts believe is the most important determinant of health.

"In nature children and animals exercise in bursts," Dr. Linchitz eagerly explains. "They never do any sustained exercise. A cheetah chases an antelope and if he doesn't catch the antelope he sits down and rests while the antelope rests maybe 50 or 100 yards away. If the antelope kept running it would run into the territory of the next cheetah and get tired and eaten. Dr. Dardik recognized that if you exercise the body in bursts of activity with significant rest in between you are training the heart and it acts like a young heart. If you exercise with the heart rate in a narrow range for a long period of time, like typical aerobic activity, you are training the heart to stay in that narrow range. Youth and robust health is associated with heart rate variability. In fact, it is well known in medical circles that one of the predictors of long term health is heart rate variability. We don't train for that variability." This theory has been adopted by a company called LifeWaves, which provides its members with a prescribed individualized training program that can be downloaded from its website. After a workout, personal data such as heart rate recovery time and maximum heart rate are uploaded to the website. A new workout prescription then comes back. Linchitz does 11 such workouts a month, combined with regular yoga classes. Typical of his newfound serenity he has forsaken the more intense Ashtanga yoga, in which strenuous poses are held for a long period, and taken up the gentler hatha and Iyengar styles.

Although he is quite circumspect today about the origins of his cancer Dr. Linchitz went through an initial period when he wondered what caused his illness, after all he was a non-smoker all his life. A good argument exists for hereditary roots—his own mother died of lung cancer. In fact, her tumor occurred in almost exactly the same location as his own.

There is also a link between lung cancer and radon exposure. Radon is a naturally occurring form of radiation found in soil and water. Many homes in North America were built on contaminated soil and Linchitz lived in one such home in his early years. There is also the possibility that the cause lies in a viral infection, but he no longer wants to spend time worrying about it. He claims total responsibility for destroying his immune system with his various excesses. It is a subject he has grown comfortable talking about and one that is the focus of a book he has written. At the time of this writing, he was negotiating with various publishers for the rights.

"There are actually four prongs of good health: diet, supplements, exercise and stress management," he declares. "I would say spirituality is the deepest region of that. But one of the things I have realized is you cannot control that. There's nothing you can do by force or will or effort to have a spiritual outlook on life. This thing that happened to me, which I can't explain, is knowing I never was in charge in the first place."

Blessed with this new take on life and apparently cancer free five years later, he is also dedicating time and money to helping other cancer patients find happiness and health. In partnership with his spiritual mentor, Satyam Nadeen, Linchitz has opened the first of a series of "wellness resorts" in the United States. The first one opened this year in Dahlenega, Georgia.

The 20-room hotel—soon to be expanded to 100 rooms—is built on an 82-acre property on what is some of the most beautiful landscape in the south. The focus is on spiritual transformation and health recovery for patients who have recently undergone

chemotherapy treatments. Content with his lot in life despite such personal upheaval, Rick Linchitz now wants to help others deal with their suffering. He also wants to impart his newfound philosophy upon them and see them rebound from personal strife.

“Life is so short, comparatively speaking, and the universe is so vast. What does it matter if I live 53, 75 years when the universe is billions of years old?” he declares with conviction. “No matter how things turn out I look upon everything as a blessing, including the cancer, and I wouldn’t have been able to say that when it first happened. I am not afraid of death anymore. I guess on one level I know that we are all dying from the time we are born!”

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