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PROFILE

Norman Gay, MD

Renaissance Anti-Aging Physician

by Donna Caruso

Like every physician, Dr. Norman Gay loves to see his patients get healthy, but changing lives one by one has never been enough for him. As the Bahamas' longest-serving minister of health (from 1984 to 1990), this anti-aging pioneer remains involved in efforts to improve public health not only for his own country, but for the world. And in his spare time, Dr. Gay is a champion bodybuilder, still competitive at the age of 62.



Currently medical director of the Bahamas Health Institute and still active in his country's public health affairs, Dr. Gay has long promoted a holistic approach to health, despite encountering many roadblocks along the way. He currently participates in a pilot project aimed at helping to establish a national nutrition and fitness education program for the Bahamas.

Of the relationship between traditional and complementary medicine, Dr. Gay notes, "Over 90% of our health care budgets are spent on disease processes, with less than 10% devoted to the other side of the equation, where people have their health and want to keep it." He believes the staggering escalation in world health care costs cannot continue. "Any system is doomed to fail," he says, "unless we spend time helping people take responsibility for and assist with their own health in order to hold on to what they have. Why should we give people new hearts instead of helping them to keep the ones they have?"

Dr. Gay credits his mother, a Seventh-Day Adventist, with setting him on the path to "healthy living, a healthy body, and a healthy mind," including his early dedication to physical fitness. That dedication continues to this day. The 1982 Bahamas and Southern States "Masters" champion in his weight class, Dr. Gay is preparing for yet another bodybuilding competition. He is past president of the Caribbean Bodybuilding Federation, the Bahamas Olympic Committee, and the Bahamas Confederation of Amateur Sports, and was recently appointed chairman of the Bahamas Boxing Commission.



A Holistic Approach

As a physician, Dr. Gay emphasizes nutrition, supplements, exercise, healthy lifestyle practices, and positive thinking. "The mind has enormous power," he says, "and we have the capacity to control much of it. Today, people are recognizing this all over the world and it's even beginning to reach some medical schools and hospitals. The state of mind of the individual very often determines whether he or she lives or dies."

Several years ago, Dr. Gay was deeply impressed when he came across an article featuring CAT-scan pictures of the brain illustrating the physical effects of positive and negative thoughts. "It was fascinating to see that different brain areas had increased or decreased activity, depending on the type of thoughts that were in the person's mind," he explains. The beneficial effects of positive thinking were evident through the chemicals it created and their subsequent cellular activity.

His emphasis on the positive is evident even in his choice of words. For example, Dr. Gay notes, "we say 'anti-aging,' but maybe that's not such a good word. Maybe it should be 'the prevention of premature aging and the extension of health span,' "two primary goals that characterize his medical philosophy.

Dr. Gay became a member of the International Academy of Preventive Medicine in the 1970s and a member of the Life Extension Foundation in the 1980s. "I've been a follower since Durk and Sandy's book," he says. "It was a real eye-opener in showing how to provide the body with substances that would help it carry out its activities so it doesn't age as quickly."

Obstacles to Living Longer

Exactly what does Dr. Gay see as the major problems affecting our ability to live longer and healthier lives?

The first is poor nutrition. Dr. Gay recalls a US government report on soil depletion dating all the way back to 1936, when farmers were forced to produce high crop volumes just to survive, and the soil was never allowed to recuperate. In recognition of the problem, he says, “animals were supplemented, but human beings weren’t.” He believes that today, as in 1936, it is impossible to get the nutrients we need solely from our food, and that everyone needs to take supplements.

But it is more than depleted soil and a lack of nutrients in our food that necessitate supplements, according to Dr. Gay. “We have elevated stress almost all the time, which increases the metabolic rate and makes us nutritionally challenged. It’s no wonder we’re seeing such levels of chronic disease, because the basis of it has to be that the body doesn’t have what it needs to work with.”

As an example, Dr. Gay cites the growing incidence of type II diabetes, which he links to the increasing incidence of obesity around the world. He believes this is one area that public health policy should deal with more strongly. “Obesity and type II diabetes will continue to escalate,” he predicts, as a result of stress factors and a lack of optimal nutrition, proper sleep, adequate fluids, and exercise.

Moreover, our bodies are in a continual state of change and flux, putting constant demands on our systems. “The rate at which your body is able to keep up with repair and change determines the age at which you get old and die,” notes Dr. Gay. Fortunately, he and other anti-aging physicians can now provide the information, care, and tools needed to help restore and maintain their patients’ good health for many years to come.

Prescription for Health

Exactly how does Dr. Gay care for himself and his patients? For starters, “I always endeavor to get sufficient sleep,” he says, pointing to what he calls an epidemic of sleep deprivation. Dr. Gay says that sleep requirements differ for different people and that you can judge the amount you need by the way you feel when you wake up in the morning. Are you rested? Do you have the energy you need to get you through the day? If not, it is essential to find a way to get the sleep your body needs.

Next, Dr. Gay takes vitamin supplements, including the Life Extension Mix, which he calls the best preparation of its kind, and the Life Extension Booster, both of which he strongly recommends to his patients. He especially likes the inclusion of all eight forms of vitamin E, noting that most people are only familiar with the four tocopherols and are not aware of the importance of the four tocotrienols, which “have an impact in protecting fat-soluble areas, like the brain, that control the rest of us.” He also stresses the importance of vitamins C and E, the body’s antioxidants in the water-soluble and fat-soluble areas, and fish oil with its omega-3 fatty acids.

“I take omega-3s in larger quantities than the average person,” Dr. Gay says, “because I’m building muscle and looking at being an elite athlete.” For muscle repair, Dr. Gay consumes one gram of protein per pound of body weight daily. His carb-ohydrates for energy are mainly derived from vegetables and fruits, and his fats from omega-3 fatty acids. He also takes phytonutrients for disease prevention, including prostate-protective Life Extension supplements.

When seeing new patients, Dr. Gay begins with a lengthy first meeting, in which the patients learn about his medical philosophy and their responsibility for their own bodies and health care. “They walk out of my office in a daze,” says Dr. Gay with a laugh. “They find out it’s not going to be like renting a car, where it’s good enough to be able to drive around but not important enough to find out how it works.”

Dr. Gay prescribes a balanced diet of healthy foods; sufficient fluids for proper hydration; adequate sleep; an exercise program including 30 minutes of aerobics daily; and, of course, a positive attitude. While he uses laboratory tests, including blood work, to evaluate his patients’ health, he usually relies most on the overall program just outlined. Why?

“Because once people are doing the things they need to do, they are taking care of most of their symptoms,” he says. “The symptoms are the result of their bodies telling them something it doesn’t like. You get those things right and most of the symptoms disappear.”

As for remaining positive, Dr. Gay notes, “You could walk out of my office and somebody drives in front of you and you go into a rage. You could spend your time thinking about how stupid that person is, or you could think about how good it is that you didn’t get hit. Now you decide which one you want to do.”



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