

LE Magazine September 2005

## PROFILE

### Daniel Tucker, MD

#### A Pioneering Practitioner of Anti-Aging Medicine

By Sue Kovach

Browsing a bookstore in 1981, Daniel Tucker, MD, found a book that intrigued him: *The Life-Extension Revolution: The Definitive Guide to Better Health, Longer Life, and Physical Immortality*, by Saul Kent. He bought the book, read it, and found within the pages a philosophy that matched his own professional and personal beliefs about medicine and how it should be practiced.

Dr. Tucker, whose allergy, immunology, and anti-aging practice is located in West Palm Beach, FL, has always taken an integrative approach to medicine. He promotes proper nutrition, exercise, and supplement use for his patients. He firmly believes in diet's role in helping manage disease, a belief instilled by his health-conscious mother and solidified while he attended Duke University School of Medicine in the mid-1950s.

During the 1960s and '70s, Dr. Tucker found that practicing integrative medicine was a lonely proposition. Few physicians, and even fewer patients, understood or cared to understand what Dr. Tucker considered the foundations of wellness.

"I have always been unhappy with the great emphasis conventional medicine places on 'miracle' drugs," he explains. "I believe that proper diet, exercise, a non-stressful environment, and supplements can help you achieve a great deal of health and wellness.

"At Duke in the 1950s, they knew and taught the importance of diet in treating disease. Today, most doctors don't receive adequate training in nutrition and favor a pharmaceutical approach. So much of academic medicine today is heavily supported by professors doing drug studies, who naturally bring these products to the young physician's attention."

#### DISCOVERING LIFE EXTENSION EARLY ON

Soon after reading Kent's book, Dr. Tucker learned that Kent was opening the Life Extension Foundation in nearby Hollywood, FL. At last, he thought, he and other innovative physicians had a place to turn for professional support and information.

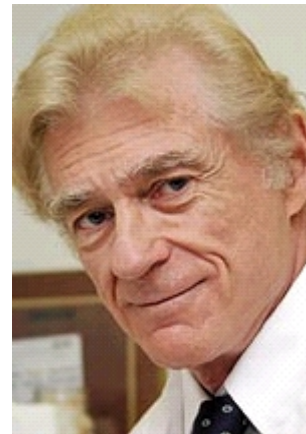
"I attended Saul's first lectures in the very early days when he was living in a motel across the street from the Foundation's office," recalls Dr. Tucker. "Saul was the first person to focus the known information and make it readily accessible in one location. The Life Extension Foundation, for me, was and still is a place to look to, a validation of the direction I wanted to go in my medical practice. At a time when I felt pretty much alone in my beliefs, it was a joy to find there were other people who thought the way I did."

As an early customer of and advocate for the Foundation, Dr. Tucker quickly made Life Extension an important part of his professional practice and personal life. He recommended the Foundation as a source of supplements and sold many of its products out of his office. He followed Life Extension protocols and funneled anti-aging information to his patients, discovering that most of them were highly receptive.

"I may have shocked a few of them, or even lost a patient or two who thought I'd gone off on a tangent from what I was supposed to be treating them for," he notes.

Dr. Tucker also began an aggressive life extension program on his first anti-aging patient: himself. From this experience, he gained important insights that have profoundly affected how he treats his patients.

"Everyone truly is an individual, and what works for one person might not for someone else," he explains. "Each patient deserves customized tests. I also learned the importance of closely monitoring patients. I've occasionally gotten test results that didn't



Daniel Tucker, MD

make sense until the patients admitted they weren't following the program I thought they were."



## INCORPORATING ANTI-AGING MEDICINE

Dr. Tucker made anti-aging medicine part of his practice, taking the anti-aging board exams in 1999 and becoming a board examiner from 2001 to 2003. He wrote the protocol on allergies for the third edition of the Foundation's Disease Prevention and Treatment book, and revised it for the fourth edition. A copy of the book is in each of his exam rooms, as a reference for his patients and himself.

"When I'm explaining something to a patient, I often hand them the book so they can read about it for themselves," he says. "Seeing it reinforced in writing, they're more likely to understand it and follow the protocols. But I learn from my patients, too. They bring me books and articles, and many read Life Extension magazine and have questions about every issue that comes out."

Dr. Tucker's allergy and immunology practice consists of roughly equal proportions of men and women, spanning the entire age spectrum. His anti-aging practice sees a similar but older population. He notes that it is not uncommon for allergy patients to start an anti-aging program, or for anti-aging patients to discover that they have allergy problems.

Dr. Tucker takes a comprehensive medical history for every patient, with anti-aging patients receiving more detailed evaluations based on Life Extension protocols. He believes spending time with patients is critical, and typically spends an hour on the first visit and the same on the follow-up appointment. All patients receive a customized blood chemistry work-up. Allergy and immunology patients also receive immune system evaluations.

"I cast a pretty wide net of tests, and check everyone's thyroid hormones, because hypothyroidism is remarkably common if you start looking for it in the ways that Life Extension suggests," he says. "From test results, I make exercise, dietary, and supplement recommendations, and hormone replacement if indicated, using both over-the-counter and pre-scripted products. I may recommend pharmaceutical treatment for specific problems. Whatever turns up, I try to offer a reasonable approach to making it better."

## PERSONALIZED APPROACH YIELDS RESULTS

Dr. Tucker often helps take care of people who pose a challenge for other physicians. While most patients specifically seek him out, some are referred by colleagues who may be suspicious that a fungal colonization or infection has a role in the patient's illness.

One such patient, a 35-year-old female, complained of fatigue, anxiety, light-headedness, heart palpitations, weight gain, and frequent colds and sinus infections since high school. She saw many doctors over the years, including psychiatrists, but had no diagnosis. When she was referred to Dr. Tucker in 1990, she was barely functional.

Dr. Tucker took an extensive medical history, performed a complete exam, and ordered blood work and allergy testing. She was severely allergic to milk, suffered other moderate food allergies, and had sensitivity to many molds. Dr. Tucker suspected an overgrowth of candida in the gastrointestinal system, and began an integrative treatment program, incorporating Life Extension protocols that included allergy injections, dietary modifications, pharmaceuticals, and natural therapies.

After a few days on the yeast syndrome diet, the anti-fungal drugs nystatin and ketoconazole, and the supplements garlic and Twinlab® Yeast Fighters®, the patient reported flu-like symptoms lasting nearly a week. Some practitioners refer to this brief exacerbation of symptoms as the "Herxheimer reaction" and believe it is caused by dying microorganisms releasing toxic by-products. She slowly began to feel better, and five months later, many of her symptoms were gone and others greatly lessened in severity. She steadily improved over the years, quit smoking, made dietary changes, and began an anti-aging program. Now, at age 50, she is fit and healthy.

"She's doing things she'd never done before, like running and martial arts training, and she rarely gets sick," says Dr. Tucker. "She's frequently mistaken for being 35 years old. I now see her once a year for a checkup. She's a true success story."

## STILL CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

Despite successes such as this one, Dr. Tucker still finds difficulties in practicing functional medicine within today's health care system. He particularly objects to insurance controls that clash with treatment he considers to be in the patient's best interests. He believes all medicine should be patient-centered, with each patient being the best judge of his or her unique needs.



"We all ultimately should be in control of our own health and destiny, it's what being a US citizen is all about," he explains. "In the five-minutes-per-patient world, physicians don't have time to talk with and really get to know the patient. I believe the current system of more tests, more doctors, and more specialists, allegedly to save money, costs more money in the end. It simply wouldn't be necessary if one doctor could spend enough time with a patient."

At the age of 72, Dr. Tucker has no plans to stop practicing medicine his way. While practicing anti-aging medicine is somewhat easier now than in the past, he notes, recognition for the field of anti-aging medicine still has a long way to go.

"There's a certain amount of prejudice against this," according to Dr. Tucker. "A lot of people think it's sacrilegious to interfere with God's plan, that aging is part of life and you should accept it gracefully. I don't particularly want to accept it gracefully, and I'm happy to meet with other people who feel the same way."

All Contents Copyright © 1995-2009 Life Extension Foundation All rights reserved.

**LifeExtension**<sup>®</sup>

These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. The information provided on this site is for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from your physician or other health care professional or any information contained on or in any product label or packaging. You should not use the information on this site for diagnosis or treatment of any health problem or for prescription of any medication or other treatment. You should consult with a healthcare professional before starting any diet, exercise or supplementation program, before taking any medication, or if you have or suspect you might have a health problem. You should not stop taking any medication without first consulting your physician.