

LE Magazine November 1998

## PROFILE

### The Radio Doctor Is In Tuning in to a moderate, balanced regimen

On a recent summer Saturday, the medical issue being discussed on the radio show *Dr. Ron's Health Hour* is sleep disorders..insomnia, snoring, how to treat them, etc. The amiable medical expert, radio show host Dr. Ronald Keys is dispensing sound advice ranging from the use of melatonin (1 milligram at night is unlikely to be toxic, dangerous or addictive) to the best way to get a good night's rest (don't eat or exercise right before going to bed).

One satisfied caller, whose question had to do with sleep apnea, says the radio discussion is one of the best dialogues he's ever heard on the subject of sleep.

Keys has been helping radio listeners deal with their health concerns as often as twice a week at WEVD, 1050 AM, in New York City for two years. He also is co-host of the Health 2000 show, on the same station. Keys' programs deal with such health issues as the real story on Viagra, how to minimize the effects of Alzheimer's disease through lifestyle, diet and exercise, and how to head off stroke and heart disease via the judicious use of antioxidants.

Keys usually starts things off with a brief overview of the subject at hand, often with the help of a guest medical expert, before going to the phones for questions and comments from listeners in several states. Most of these people know Keys, 55, as a specialist in developmental disorders, co-director of the American Aging Association, and certified member of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine. He's a one-man databank on cutting-edge treatments in alternative health.

Few listeners probably realize that Keys wears another hat as well. Ronald B. Keys, J.D., Ph.D., also is an 11-year veteran of the Michigan state prosecutor's office and the Queens, N.Y., district attorney's office, where he has tried hundreds of felony cases, including homicide, as assistant district attorney.

A native of Detroit, the dual-minded Keys got a jump on his medical career by training at Wayne State University medical school in the 1960s, stitching up knife- and gunshot-wound victims in the local emergency room on weekends. Unsure of what direction to pursue in medicine, he started a master's degree program in clinical psychology at Kent State University, only to decide he needed something completely different early in the program. The law beckoned and Keys switched to the Detroit College of Law, receiving his doctor of law degree in 1970.

Though law was his primary focus throughout the 1980s, this was also the time he first read Sandy Shaw and Durk Pearson's groundbreaking book, *Life Extension: A Practical Scientific Approach*, which reignited his interest in clinical medicine, particularly geriatrics. By the time he moved to New York as an assistant district attorney in Queens, he was so committed to reviving his medical career that he went to night school, earning credits toward a doctoral degree in biopsychology. He received his Ph.D. in 1994 and continued his post-doctoral work at the Columbia University-New York Geriatric Education Center, where he trained at five Manhattan-based hospitals. Later, Keys focused on geriatric assessment, rehabilitation medicine and geropsychiatry.

While law and medicine might appear to be two completely unrelated fields, Keys sees similarities in the way he works with people as a medical consultant, psychologist and attorney.

"There is a certain role for advocacy when you are representing a patient's interest," he says. "For example, one of my standard statements to a patient is that you are entitled to a copy of your lab and medical reports. Increasingly people are embracing a partnership model in health care."

These days when he's not on the radio he's apt to be on the phone with doctors in different clinical laboratories, developing



interpretations of patient work-ups so he can make treatment recommendations. People from all over the country seek out Keys. He also sees patients in his Mineola, N.Y., office, and conducts workshops, like a recent one on non-pharmaceutical therapies for attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity, in which he discussed the influence of diet on brain function.

Most of his work is infused with common themes: seeking out nutrition and functional-medicine treatment avenues and making full use of the wide array of laboratory testing now available. For example, five years ago there was no such thing as an essential fatty acid profile, he notes. That tool now exists and can be used to reveal the underlying metabolic defects that cause attention deficit disorder. In many cases, a change in diet can correct these defects, whereas traditional drug treatments address only the symptoms of the disorder.

Keys is a real stickler when it comes to thorough laboratory testing. He gives the example of someone who becomes chunky through the thighs or midsection past the age of 40, who has not had this condition in the past. It's possible that this thickness is due to a deficiency in human growth hormone, he says, reflected in lower insulin-like growth factor (IGF-I), and can be reversed. In fact, proper lab studies can help redefine the process of aging.

"What we used to think of as normal in someone 45 or 50 is not necessarily normal any longer," he says. To get the whole story, Keys recommends a full hormone evaluation rather than singling out one hormone-say, estrogen-for inspection. Checking only one hormone level can actually do more harm than good. "It's absolute silliness to think only estrogen pathways are involved in aging," he says. "The idea is to request everything for endocrine balancing."

In making this point, Keys likes to use the analogy of a car being serviced. "You take your car in to the gas station and the attendant looks under the hood, he checks the brakes and transmission fluid and the battery fluid...*all* fluids. Yet, in standard hormone testing, the doctor looks at only one hormone. Well, I believe in dipstick biochemistry in hormone evaluation."

Among the hormones that should be checked, he says, are pregnenolone, DHEA, IGF-I, thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), triiodothyronine (T3) and thyroxine (T4) levels, as well as testosterone for men and women. In addition, women should have their follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone releasing hormone (LH-RH) checked, plus all estrogen levels. Men should have progesterone, prolactin and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels measured. "If we have this high standard when we take our car into the gas station, why shouldn't we have the same level of completeness when we go to our physician?" he asks.

And just as that car may be running well one day, but not the next, Keys believes the body needs different levels of service depending on the day. He recommends to his patients that they be flexible in their use of vitamins and supplements, varying the type of supplement and dosage levels according to how they feel on a particular day. Genetics, environment, lifestyle and diet should also be considered. "Some days are just bad hair days when you feel like hell, and you may need more of one thing," he says. "The body is never the same from day to day."

Keys himself takes L-glutamine for growth-hormone release five days in a row, then takes two days off and repeats the pattern for about three months. He also flip-flops between pregnenolone and DHEA. He says that pregnenolone is better for daytime use, because it can make you hyper-attentive, and that DHEA is good for evening use. He won't use grape seed extract for days at a time unless his back is bothering him; then he'll use it as a natural anti-inflammatory, along with high doses of vitamins C and E. In the weeks leading up to an event requiring top brain function, he says it's best to start loading up on Ginkgo biloba and grape seed extract.

Only by keeping abreast of the latest developments in science and medicine, he says, can Keys give his patients what he thinks they deserve most-a choice. "The idea," he says, "is that a doctor should know mainstream clinical medical procedures as well as the alternatives, because the main thing is that people should have a choice in health care." -Twig Mowatt

Profiles takes a look at real people who exemplify the Life Extension Foundation way of life: a commitment to great health and nutrition, and an abiding respect for body and mind. Are you a candidate for a future Profiles, or know someone who is? Contact the Editors at Life Extension Magazine, 1100 West Commercial Blvd, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309. Phone: 954-766-8433. Or e-mail the Editors at: [lef@lef.org](mailto:lef@lef.org).

[Back to the Magazine Forum](#)

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.