

BODY AND SOUL IN WHOLE

By PATRICIA ESPINOSA



Dr. Jeffrey A. Morrison at his Park Avenue South office, The Morrison Center. Photograph courtesy The Morrison Center.

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, Dr. Jeffrey A. Morrison has been helping patients optimize their health and overcome disease through integrative medicine and nutrition at his Park Avenue South office, The Morrison Center. When he's not tending to his busy practice, he can be seen on "The View," "The Dr. Oz Show" and the Discovery Channel or found across the country lecturing on integrated health. In 2011, he penned his first book "Cleanse Your Body, Clear Your Mind." I recently caught up with the good doctor and here's what he had to say:

March WAG is all about empowering yourself, in part by being smart about the doctors you choose. As a leader in the field of integrative medicine, what should people look for in a health care provider?

"There is no question that doctors today are well-trained to care for their patients' health conditions. However, the practice and delivery of medicine is going through an evolution. Patients are finding themselves needing to decide whether their health and physical symptoms can be addressed within the typical 10-minute doctor's visit or see a doctor that will spend time getting to know them and discover the underlying cause of their symptoms. If patients are looking to find the cause of their health problems, they may want to see a doctor that has additional training in integrative medicine.

"Through a partnership of patient and practitioner, integrative medicine seeks to treat the whole person (body, mind, spirit and environment), to assist the innate healing properties of each patient and to promote health and wellness through the treatment and prevention of disease.

"Integrative medicine doctors are generally board-certified in a medical specialty and have taken additional training in nutrition and other holistic practices that enhance their diagnostic and treatment options. A list of board-certified integrative medicine doctors can be found at abihm.org."

With popular websites like WebMD.com and MayoClinic.org, would you agree the Internet has led people to take more control of their health care by behaving

more as active consumers than as passive patients?

"There is no question that the Internet has given patients the power to take their health into their own hands. I feel this is one of the greatest values the Internet has provided our society. I can think of numerous occasions that a patient has come to me with a printout from the Internet that has led the patient and myself to a successful treatment for the condition. By embracing this reality, doctors truly have another useful tool to uncovering the cause of their patients' symptoms, the patients themselves.

A few of my favorite online resources include mindbodygreen.com (daily wellness inspiration straight to your inbox); ewg.org (the nation's most effective environmental health research and advocacy organization); and ewg.org/skindeep (a guide to skin care products)."

Describe your approach to medicine and the techniques used in your practice for helping patients achieve optimum health?

"At The Morrison Center we believe in the body's innate ability to detoxify and heal itself. Our patient's health and happiness is the optimal outcome of our service.

"Everything we do empowers and enables our patients to take control and manage their health and wellness naturally and effectively.

"We do this by partnering with our patients to find the underlying cause of their condition and then provide a thorough, unique, individualized treatment and nutritionally based program to deliver optimal outcomes.

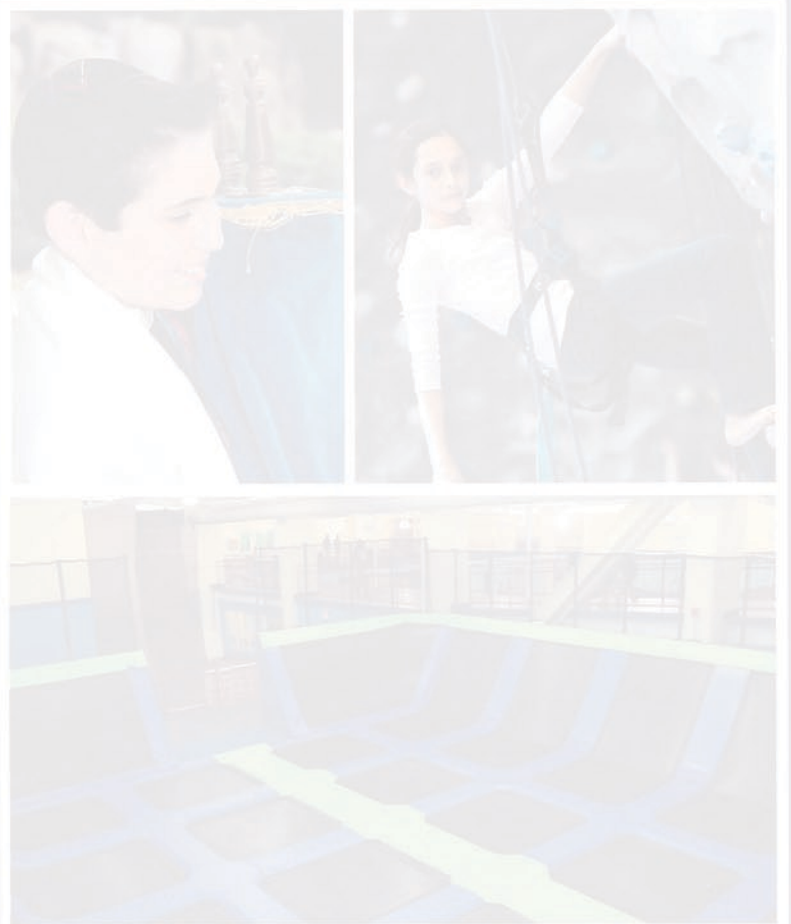
"We are specialists in the practice of integrative medicine. We utilize nutrition and function focused tests, health and nutrition counseling and targeted nutritional supplements and prescriptions to promote health and treat and prevent diseases.

"With compassion, respect and personalized attention, we help our patients achieve optimum health."

Prior to opening The Morrison Center, you worked at the Atkins Center for Complementary Medicine under the late Dr. Robert Atkins, developer of the low-carb diet. Did that training influence your nutritional approach to medicine?

"Dr. Atkins was a medical maverick.

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Many have questioned his Atkins Diet as being radical, unsustainable and ineffective. However, scientific research has shown his suggestions to be the most successful for long-term weight loss when compared to low-protein, low-fat and balanced diets.

"During the years since he's passed away, many authors have come out with even healthier versions of his plan. Weight loss and nutrition plans like the South Beach Diet, the Paleo Diet and my Daily Benefit Detox Program all owe an acknowledgement to Dr. Atkins for his contributions to our understanding of how fat can be good."

Many of your patients come to you because they want to lose weight. What's the biggest mistake people make when they're trying to lose weight?

"One of the biggest misconceptions people have is that there is a relationship to the amount of calories a person eats and how much they weigh. Probably, subconsciously, everyone knows this doesn't make any sense, however, there is a great deal of marketing literature that continues to push this idea.

"I'm sure we all have friends that say they can eat what ever they want and won't gain a pound. At the same time, I've seen numerous patients who have cried in my office because they can't lose an ounce even on two small meals a day. How does this happen?

"The two top reasons I've seen that prevent a person from being able to lose weight, even while on a very low-calorie diet are:

- Food allergies. The typical food allergy people hear about causes severe swelling or itchy hives very quickly after an allergic food is consumed. This is called an IgE-related food allergy and a blood test can easily detect this. There is another type of food allergy that's not as easy to discern. It's called a delayed food allergy, also known as IgG4 food allergy. There are blood tests for this, but they are not perfect. An elimination diet, like my Daily Benefit Detox Program, can help people to eliminate the most likely food allergens and once removed, the weight usually falls off pretty quickly.

- Hormone imbalance. While most people assume slow metabolism is associated only with low thyroid hormone, I've

seen three other hormones play major roles in preventing weight loss. These hormones are insulin, cortisol and estrogen. With high insulin and cortisol, weight is usually gained around the abdomen. High estrogen can cause weight gain especially on the hips. Low thyroid generally causes weight gain all over the body. A blood test can help uncover hormone imbalance."

Everyone seems to be talking about personalized medicine as the future of health care. Does genetic testing play a role in your practice?

"There is no question that genetic testing will become a more common component of a medical workup. We've been using gene testing through two companies for the past six months – GenoMind (genomind.com) and 23andme (23andme.com). I've been very excited about insights these tests provide and the improved precision of the recommendations I'm able to make based on these gene test results.

"The gene tests are essentially looking for genetic variations or snps (single nucleotide polymorphisms). These snps can make us susceptible to certain health issues.

"The GenoMind test helps me to understand susceptibility and treatment options for people with anxiety, depression and mood disorders. The 23andme genetic test gives me additional information about detoxification pathways.

"The most important point I tell my patients about the results is that everyone has snps (no one is perfect) and the results only show potentials. This is a concept called epigenetics and refers to the reality that our genes are turned on or turned off by environmental influences.

"So even though I'm super-excited about genetic testing, I both take the information with a grain of salt and emphasize that by following my Daily Benefit Program and making healthy lifestyle choices, we'll be able to express our genes in the healthiest way possible.

"The road to achieve optimal health and happiness is not an event; it's a process. I hope my Daily Benefit Detox Program becomes a part of your process to regain and maintain natural and long-lasting good health." ■