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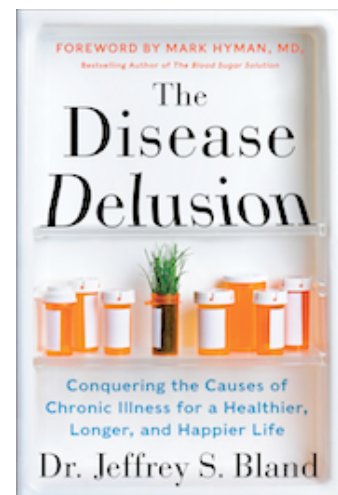
BOOK REVIEWS

Jeffrey S. Bland. The Disease Delusion: Conquering the Causes of Chronic Illness for a Healthier, Longer, and Happier Life. New York: Harper Wave 2014. 410 pp. \$26.99 Appendices: Diet plan, Glossary of scientific terms, Resources, and Notes/ References. Good index

This is an excellent discussion of functional medicine, addressing the ways the various body systems interrelate in health and in chronic disease.

...when we think about how our bodies work – something we usually do when they're not working very well – we ought to be thinking about how the component parts of these systems relate to one another and to all the other systems.

Yet our current medical model – the way health-care professionals are trained and the strategy of therapy they apply – is not based on such systems thinking. Precisely because it derives from the germ theory, it is based on reductionist thinking: find the bug and nuke it with a drug developed for just that purpose. Period. As brilliantly as the model works in providing acute care, it clearly does nothing to restore or maintain balance among functional systems or the networks that connect them. (p. 4-5)



Jeffrey Bland explains that conventional doctors have subdivided people's chronic diseases into single organ system problems, according to the physicians' sub-specialty. The cardiologist, who knows much of what there is to know about heart disease, treats blood pressure and cardiac problems; the urologist treats problems of the kidneys and bladder; the gynecologist treats problems of the uterus and ovaries; and so-on. This allows each specialist to gain enormous expertise in their areas of specialization. Too often, however, the problems you have may involve more than one organ system. Sadly, the communications between specialists are often minimal, which can put you into a morass of mismatched medications and other treatment plans.

Bland has excellent discussions on understanding and treating the body as a multi-function system, including:

- Assimilation and elimination
- Detoxification
- Defense
- Cellular communications
- Cellular transport

- Energy production and utilization
- Structure

When we focus on these functional systems, we can better address various organs that may be involved in a disease process. This is important in chronic illness, which frequently involves multiple systems. Bland has excellent discussions on how assessments and treatments of chronic diseases can be organized under these categories.

Bland is a biochemist, not a physician. To his credit, he briefly mentions lifestyle factors:

...your patterns of sleep and habits of relaxation, your routines of exercise or movement or sports activity, your typical nutrition and hydration, any points of stress and your resilience from same, and the personal relationship and networks of friends and acquaintances on whom you rely or with whom you routinely interact. (p. 93)

There is much more that can be said for including assessments and treatments of issues involving emotions, mind, relationships and spirit that are almost always associated with chronic diseases. With that caveat in mind, I still highly recommend this book for its detailed discussions of a systems approach to healthcare for chronic diseases.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD
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