



COMPOUNDING WITHOUT
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ANGEL IN OUR MIDST: LISA EVERETT, HOLISTIC MEDICINE PIONEER

By Bethany Klug, D.O. / Written in 2006

Lisa Everett has been challenging the status quo for a long time. It began with a high school ecology class. She learned about nuclear half lives and how xenoestrogens in pesticides affect fertility. Her class participated in the first Earth Day. One day after class she told her parents that she was starting a recycling program for their household.

“You’re totally nuts,” she recalls them saying. “Then why are you sending me to school?” she replied. “I may as well go to dance class,” another love of hers to this day.

The experience left her with a low-grade sadness for our planet that she carried for many years, and a healthy skepticism. It spurred her to continue asking questions, even through conventional pharmacy school.

“They taught that homeopathy was quackery. What that told me was that I should study that quickly as soon as I got out of school. And I did.” That was 30 years ago.

After pharmacy school, she worked for O’Brien Pharmacy, a compounding pharmacy owned by her father since the 1960s.

Back then, doctors still used remedies from the pre-antibiotic era “because they worked,” reminisces Everett. “We made a lot of natural medicines back then. They contained cinnabar, sulfur, zinc and vitamins, which still have value today.” These remedies have fallen by the wayside in favor of heavily marketed pharmaceuticals. They also made tretinoin long before Johnson and Johnson came out with Retin-A, and knew about the hair growing effects of minoxidil, now Rogaine. “It was fun because the pharmacists and the physicians engineered these remedies together to solve patient problems.” Patient care is still a favorite part of her work.

She married and began working part-time as she raised her first child. Then a defining moment came. She suffered from postpartum depression after her second

child was born. Firm in her desire to nurse her child, she refused tricyclic antidepressants like amitriptyline, the only ones available at the time. The depression felt familiar. She felt like she did when she used birth control pills. She also remembered back in pharmacy school how she questioned why progesterone suppositories were given to women in danger of miscarriage, but Provera, a progesterone-like pharmaceutical was contraindicated in pregnancy. A professor explained the differences between Provera and progesterone, including how progesterone was a natural antidepressant. “It was hormonal,” she concluded.

She delved into the literature and came across the work of British researcher Katharina Dalton, MD. She ordered every article Dalton had published and found Dalton’s work on progesterone for the treatment of postpartum depression.

By that time, her postpartum depression had lessened to severe premenstrual syndrome. “I felt like a witch half the month.” She was skeptical about treating herself with natural progesterone, given her conventional training. “I made a pact with God that if this worked, that if I ever ran into another person with my symptoms - knowing what I had gone through just to come to this information, and there was no help from physicians for me - I would make sure that woman not only benefitted from my medical and scientific knowledge, but from my personal story. Little did I know I would run into twelve women a day!”

Once she was trained, she realized women were being medicated with dangerous drugs or having surgery for conditions that were normals such as fibroids, endometriosis, ovarian cysts, menopause, PMS, osteoporosis, obesity, anxiety, insomnia and depression. “It broke my heart.”

She kept her pact because natural progesterone totally changed her life. She discontinued it, just to be sure, and her symptoms came roaring back. Coincident with her life changing discovery, she met the head of psychiatry at Kansas University Medical Center. He and his wife had just returned from the first meeting of the American Holistic Medical Association where the differences between natural progesterone and Provera were presented. He wanted to learn more and found Everett to be a ready resource. Soon she was seeing patients in his office.

“It wasn’t just a hormone consultation. There was always a nutritional component.” First she used Optivite, developed by a physician specifically for PMS. She updated the formula to create the multivitamin she uses today, Optimal Daily Allowance. “It was always about getting off sugar and caffeine during that time, too.”

She and her brother Eric completed training to become Certified Clinical Nutritionists, learning more about therapeutic dosing and validating what she already knew. “I felt it was important to help people avoid taking so many medications,” said Everett. When patients came in to fill a medication, she would explain the nutritional and hormonal causes of their condition and offer a different strategy. “My Dad started calling us the ‘un-pharmacists’ because we would talk people out of filling their medications!”

“I always knew I wanted to help people in a real way. That always came before the bottom line. I think it’s why our pharmacy has survived all these years when independent pharmacies have gone by the wayside.”

O’Brien Pharmacy has not always carried natural products. Everett started the natural pharmacy when she wasn’t getting the results she expected from health food store supplements. O’Brien Pharmacy already subjected their products to independent assays, so she assayed some of her patients’ supplements. “I’ll never forget this one product that claimed guaranteed potency, standardized extract that was supposed to have 50 milligrams of Echinacea per capsule. Nine capsules each contained one milligram. It broke my heart, because we wasted so much time.” This started a two and on-half year process of investigating supplement companies “serious about making America well” and the birth of the natural pharmacy.

She has since founded the Kansas City Holistic Centre. Her goal is to empower patients to take charge of their health, make independent decisions, and to partner with their practitioner “to make decisions based on more than ‘standard of care’ and what we fear will happen if you don’t take this drug or do this or that,” claims Everett. “I’m just doing what I can in my little corner of the world so patients will have a choice in their health care.”

She has a broad vision for the future. “My hope is that physicians will first health themselves before they will try to heal others, that we in the medical community will come together and be the village that can raise a patient. I believe this is possible. My vision is that we can take this into critical care. My vision is that we can operate more from a place of love in medicine than the place of fear that we operate from today.”

She hasn’t forgotten her high school ecology class. Her passion for transformation of medicine extends to the world. For several years now she has attended Bioneers, www.bioneers.org. “We can only heal ourselves to the degree we heal this planet. My vision is that we become more conscious and active on an individual basis in holding our corporations, our government and mostly ourselves accountable for what we do to this planet. We must do this from a place of love, and not from a place of accusation, condemnation and judgment. We must come forward together to do what we can to change the health of our planet and not let money and our egos get in the way of that any longer.” She encourages everyone to check out www.bioneers.org. “You’ll be uplifted, grateful and inspired to know so many people are working on behalf of this vision.”

Lisa Everett, RPh, CCN and her brother, Eric, co-own O’Brien Pharmacy, www.obrienrx.com, where she has practiced clinical pharmacy and nutrition for over 30 years.