Mary Lee, in the past we've talked about hormone health and we've talked about over medication and the problems in our system and we've talked about cholesterol and heart health and all of these different issues that we're seeing and that you've seen firsthand in recent decades go up so quickly, and what the root causes are. I feel like we've really covered a whole lot of ground in the last three episodes. In this one, what I would love to do is really tie together what I think is so beautiful about your approach of tying in the conventional approach and the natural approach and working together with them, not shunning either one. Which I feel like, doctors, at times, can shun the holistic side completely, and at the same time there are people on the holistic side that shun the medical side completely when there is a time and a place for that.

We really touched on how there's the twofold problem of doctors being so overwhelmed and so busy because of all these health problems that they truly can't address every problem as much as maybe they would even like. I know I've talked to doctors who are just as frustrated as we are with the system and the problems. Then the other side is that, as patients, we sometimes don't know where to look for answers and we either can't or won't take responsibility for our
health. Sometimes that might be a patient that doesn't want to do the hard stuff, doesn't want to make the dietary changes.

It could also be someone like me and I think a lot of people listening will be able to relate to this. That for years, I knew that there was something wrong with my health, but I truly could not get answers for it. In my own life, just to share an example of that, I started having hormone-related type problems, especially after college. It was a lot of the root causes that we've talked about, I basically created those problems for myself and I'll take responsibility for that with lack of sleep, tons of stress, a terrible diet, always being on the go. Just being very type A and studying non-stop. Taking, I think I had 24 hours a semester a couple of times. Just really kind of running myself into the ground.

Just like you've already explained, that can create a lot of deficiencies and for me, those deficiencies started showing up as thyroid problems, which I believe there is a genetic component there also. That tends to run in my family, but I think I also threw myself into that long before it even should have been a genetic issue. The frustrating part was, I was feeling so bad. I knew something had to be wrong and a general doctor, the first one I went to, didn't really know what was wrong. Tests looked normal. Even when I was having our first couple of children, the OB-GYN's would test me and they would say things were normal.

I wasn't getting any answers from doctors so I started researching and that's always been my default, and it's probably yours too, is to start researching when you can't find answers.

Mary Lee: [inaudible 00:02:35] Dr. Google.

Katie: Exactly. Which, I mean, that could be its own problem. We get on WebMD too much and you're convinced you're dying of every kind of cancer imaginable.

I started researching and was finding a lot of the same research that we've talked about and realizing that I thought I had a hormone imbalance, especially with the thyroid, but I couldn't find a doctor who was willing to listen and I couldn't find a doctor who was willing to do the right tests. We talked about it's more than just testing TSH or T4. It literally took me six years and eight doctors before I could get any answers to those problems. That's part of the reason that I'm so passionate about writing on the blog and this podcast and just sharing
information with other moms. Because I know how horrible that was for me and I
know that there are a lot of people who are in that place. They feel like, "I know
there's a problem. I've researched it. I'm ready to take responsibility for it, but I
don't even know where to start to find answers."

That's why I get so hopeful and encouraged when I find people like you who are
on the medical side who have had the education, who have the research, and
who have that and who have also learned about the nutritional side and learned
about the lifestyle side and are willing to try to be on the front lines of uniting
those two so that we can actually find answers for people.

I would love to hear, just first, talk us through how has it been working in the
pharmacy? We've talked about the over-arching theory of a lot of these and how
medications affect nutrient levels, but you're working with real people with real
names and real problems. What have you seen in people who are willing to take
responsibility and work with their doctors and work with you and address their
lifestyle as well? Are you seeing positive changes from that?

Mary Lee: Well, when I first got into this, nine, ten years ago when I was learning about all
this, the medications and the stress and the food, I got real emotionally charged
with my patients and I'm filling the prescriptions, filling those big bags full of
medications and I'm saying, "Oh my goodness, how can this patient do this? I've
got to reach out to her. How can they drive a car? They cannot function. This is
terrible. How so sad." I went with that for a long time and it just wore me out. I
was trying to approach these patients and trying to get them to change their lives,
but they weren't ready.

What I found out the best thing to do is put my work out there. Most the times the
patients will come to you when they're ready. Because these are big changes
and they're hard, but they're so worth doing. I feel like when you tell the patient
why they're feeling like they are, why they might have this disease, why you had
this symptom, and just talk to them about their food. What they're eating and
drinking and how they manage stress. Many, many, many times they are so open
to it and their first words they say is, "Why didn't my doctor tell me this? Why has
nobody told me this? Why didn't I hear this?" I say, "Because we're not taught
this. That's why." I had to learn this on my own and doctors are eventually going
to have to learn it on their own. Practitioners are going to have to learn this too. I
feel like they're very receptive once they understand because they, people understand common sense. You just show them, they will respond to it.

Now, you're always going to have those out there that do not want to make the changes and they're happy to take the pills. That's okay. With those, I'm a manage them as best as I can, give them as good as advice as I can in regards to their medication and it's okay. It's okay.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. You can only ... The whole, you can bring a horse to water, but you can't force them to drink.

Mary Lee: Exactly.

Katie: That's how I hope with the blog that my approach comes across as well is that I'm not trying ever to force anything on anyone, but I know that there are a lot of people looking for answers and those are people that I'm so glad that they're hopefully going to be able to find them more and more in the future.

I also think it's interesting ... We talked about this a little bit, but I'd love to talk about it here, about all the ads for pharmaceuticals. We've touched on that a little bit, but it's almost like we're programmed because every other commercial is "Ask your doctor if you need this" and half the time you don't even know what the medication is. It's just telling you to ask your doctor if you need it. A funny anecdotal story about that. When I was pregnant with my first son, I was sitting in the OB's office and I was actually already in the room waiting for him and in the gown that they get you in and all that stuff, and freezing. I'm sitting there on this table for an hour and I can hear the doctor in the next room and I'm sure he had to be as annoyed as I was. There was this older woman, I think she's probably menopausal, literally going through questions of medications that she had written down from watching TV commercials. "Well, do I need this medication?"

Mary Lee: Oh. (laughs)

Katie: "It said to ask my doctor if I need this." She must have gone through 40 or 50 of them. Let's talk about that. How this is kind of an ingrained response in our society.
Mary Lee: You know, we are only one of two countries in the whole wide world that allow pharmaceutical companies to advertise on television. Another way ... I'm glad I'm old. Back in we first got into pharmacy, you know, back in the 80's and even the 90's, these pharmaceutical companies were not allowed to advertise in anything but a medical journal. Now they're in the newspapers, they're in magazines, and they're on every other commercial. If you just sit and watch TV for 30 minutes, you're going to see pretty much a pharmaceutical company every time a commercial comes on. They make it seem so normal and so easy and this is what we're supposed to do. I believe the latest one is opioid-induced constipation from taking pain medicines. Well, I mean, that, to me, just took it to the ends degree. They make it seem so normal and that it's expected of us to get on medicines and that's not the truth. It is not normal to be on medications unless we absolutely need it.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. That's what's amazing to me. Just like you said, there are so many ads for it and, of course, everybody in the ads is happy and fit and healthy and on all these pharmaceutical drugs. It's every other commercial. A lot of them it's to fix the side effects of the one that it was just on.

Mary Lee: True.

Katie: It just seems so normal. Even all the different medications that you've mentioned by their names in the past few episodes, I realize I only know them because of TV commercials. Because I'm not on them. I don't even watch that much TV and I know them. It's kind of crazy how ingrained that is.

Now that you've given us so much information to help us understand and be able to reclaim responsibility for our health and not to just always depend on a doctor, let's talk about some of the specific steps that you would encourage patients to work with their doctors and care givers more effectively to get real answers. Because like we've said in, I think, every episode, there is a time and a place and conventional medicine can be very helpful at times, but what are some great ways that patients can work with a doctor to try to find actual answers and not just always get a prescription?

Mary Lee: First of all, you have to find the doctor that will. That's the hard part is finding the doctor that's open to it, that will work with you and not just be so quick to
prescribe a medication. That goes for nurse practitioners also. A lot of times you find that out from word of mouth and as I tell my patients, "Remember, you're paying the doctor. He's providing a service to you so don't be afraid to question him. It's okay." We would question anybody else if we were provided a service.

Ask around. Go with word of mouth. See their practitioner. If you don't like what they're saying, if your gut tells you otherwise, if you walk away feeling just like, "Uh, I'm not sure he really listened to me." Find one that will because there are plenty of doctors and practitioners out there that are changing their practice now and they want patients like you. They want a motivated patient that wants to get well. Just like these athletes. They're motivated. If they're sick or injured, I would love to work with them. Their want to get ready and get back on their feet as quick as possible. To be a motivated patient, that's a blessing to a doctor and they would more than happy be glad to work with you so just don't give up, don't accept something that you don't think is right for you. Just keep searching because they are out there. There are more and more coming on board every day. I really feel that way.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. Just to reiterate, like we've both said multiple times. I feel like doctors truly do get into medicine because they have a good heart.

Mary Lee: Absolutely.

Katie: They're fighting an uphill battle just like we are. I think it's a two-sided thing. If enough patients come to doctors with real questions and motivation and are willing to take responsibility and actually ask the hard questions, doctors are going to start being more willing to talk about that more and more. Because a lot of times in the past, they probably just been shut down if they even tried to talk about those things. There are so many doctors now, like you said, that ... I finally have found those recently. There seemed to be more that are really willing and open to talking with people about all these other lifestyle issues as well and to working with patients who are willing to work. I definitely don't want to bash doctors at all.

Another idea that I was going to suggest that was what took it for me to finally get answers is, I said that I went through all these doctors and all this time I had to start keeping my own health file. That, to me, is part of, not just outsourcing your
medical care to any health professional at all. Like you said, if any other service professional you would ask them just like if any other service I would keep up my own records and files and receipts. That was what was really helpful to me was actually keeping a file in my house that had all of my lab results from over time. All of the reports that I was getting from these doctors, even if I didn't get answers from those doctors, when I finally went to the doctor who I ended up being able to work with, I had all these years of lab results that were showing things getting slowly worse.

Mary Lee: Worse and worse.

Katie: All the stuff that I had tried. I had a list of all the supplements that I was on. All things that doctors would ask you and that are on their intake forms, but I had it in one place, which I think also helped him realize how serious I was about taking responsibility and being willing to do the work. It also gave him a more complete picture. Because in today's world, you have so many specialists. I feel like, it's not like you can go to one doctor like maybe they did 50 years ago who took care of you when you were pregnant and was your pediatrician for your kids and if you needed heart health later, you went back to him. We're kind of moving beyond the general doctor era and now we have all these specialists so all of our medical records are spread across the board. That's just my own personal tip is that it was so helpful to me to have all my medical information at my house so that I could reference it and I could see it and now I have an Evernote folder that I keep all that in. Do you have any encouragement on that as well with the patients or how they can help themselves that way?

Mary Lee: Well, you know, it's amazing to me how patients ... First of all, they don't even know their med list. Even worse, they don't even know what that prescription they're taking might be used for. Then they're taking it. Know your meds, first of all. Keep your med list with you at all times. Put it in your billfold, your purse. I'm so excited when somebody comes to me and they're asking a supplement question or a health question and I ask, "Well, what are your medications?" And they pull out a med list and I look at them and sometimes I'll hug them and say, "I'm so glad you have this because so many people don't have it nor do they seem to want to know it." Know your med list, keep it with you at all times.
Nobody has your interest of your health better than you do. It's great for doctor and a practitioner to take care of you, but you are the one that's ultimately responsible, not them. You can't blame them for your health. You've got to look within yourself and start educating yourself and learning and make baby steps and you will be on the path to much better health.

Katie: Exactly. Let's go over a couple of those baby steps one more time for maybe anybody who's jumping in at this episode. I encourage them to go listen to the previous three as well. What we've talked about, just simple tips like if you do have to take an antibiotic, because sometimes they are necessary, make sure that you're supporting your gut through lifestyle, through probiotics. Same thing with you mention some supplements that are helpful if you're taking proton pump inhibitors or cholesterol medication. Can you go over some of your basic lifestyle and dietary steps that you encourage people to do? Even if they're on medication, but to work with it.

Mary Lee: Sure. When I do a consultation, a special wellness consultation, I really focus on food and I let them know that I'm a pharmacist, not a dietitian or nutritionist, but I'm obsessed with this. I feel like I have common sense when it comes to this and I tell them to focus on three things and if you focus on these three things, you're going to know what you're eating and you're going to know that it's good or that it's not good. Because I find so many people, they will tell me what they're eating every day and they think it's pretty good, especially compared to the guy next door. I'm not worried about the guy next door, I'm worried about you. These three things. If you focus on these three things every day, you will be so much better.

Sugar. Number one. Sugar creates inflammation. As I said, other podcasts, inflammation is the source of chronic disease. Sugar disrupts the gut bacteria. Sugar actually feeds the bad bacteria, which only creates further inflammation and goes into the leaky guts. Sugar includes anything made with flour. Breads, pastas, or crackers. Because when that is digested, it turns into sugar. Sugar is ginormous in our new world today. Decrease your sugars.

Second of all, drink water. I mean, so many people drink these diet drinks, sodas, tons of coffee, juices. Anything but water. It's amazing. I had one patient tell me he only drinks water when he brushes his teeth and then he spits it out. This is the truth. This is the truth. You've got to drink water to flush the toxins out. To
flush, we eliminate through the bowel and the urine and we do that with water. Our body is 72% water so drink water! It's that easy and that's free! Okay?

Sugar was the first one. Water's the second one. Third one is eat more colorful. I know that sounds so dull, but you've got to eat colorful fruits and vegetables. That is how we nourish our body. That's what God intended it. There are so many nutrients in the skins of fruits and vegetables. We cannot duplicate that in a supplement or a multivitamin. It's like icing on the cake. It's the best part. That's what we're intended to eat and we have moved away from that drastically. We should have an emphasis on vegetables, fruits in season. Don't go overboard with fruits. Even though they're very nutritious, they have a lot of sugar too and our ancestors did not go to the grocery store and get bowls of fruit to eat. They ate fruit in season. To me, if you focus on those three things, sugar, water, color, sleep well, manage your stress, you're on your way.

Katie: Yeah. I love the colorful tip because my great grandmother, the German one, Hildegard, she actually had this thing that her kids should eat the rainbow at every meal. She wanted different color. She didn't want them to repeat any color twice on their plate. She didn't like white. She would always encourage that. I only know her because she lived to be well into her 90's. I think that's some great advice that, like you said, it seems so simple, but ... It also is fun for kids if you've got kids. They like colorful things and so it's even easier to get them to eat those.

Mary Lee: True and I tell my patients, whatever meal you're at at that moment, make sure there's some type of color on the plate. I don't care if it's carrots with breakfast, I don't care. Put some color on that plate. It will change your life. I know it's hard to get that many servings of fruits and vegetables. I think they say nine. It's hard, but hey, if you get four, that's probably more than you were getting years ago. Do this. It's easy. Add color to your plate every day. It will fight inflammation and inflammation, as I said, is the source of chronic disease.

Katie: Exactly. I love that advice to take baby steps too because if someone just listened to all four of these episodes in a row, it could definitely seem overwhelming.

Mary Lee: Definitely.
Katie: All the changes that it would seem like you have to make. I think baby steps can absolutely be the answer. Because as long as you're moving in the right direction, you're not moving in the wrong direction so at least you're starting on that path. Even if it's a slow path.

Mary Lee: That's what I tell my consultations. I'm sure they're overwhelmed and probably eyes are just back in their head by the time it's over with. I tell them, "Okay, let's pick our first battle. We're going to take a baby step here. What's it going to be? Are you going to give up those Diet Cokes yet or you going to give up your Triskets? Let's pick one and we're going to work on that. Once you get that, you're going to feel better. Then we're going to go to the next step." It's a step-wise progression. However, if you're one of these people that can walk out of my consultant room and say, "I'm doing all this," that's tremendous. That's not the way I did it. I had to baby step it. Most people have success that way.

Katie: Yeah. Absolutely. Again, I like that you are addressing both sides. I think that's just such an important thing because it's so easy just to take the quick fix sometimes, but people don't realize we're not having these health problems because we're deficient in PPI's and we're not having these health problems because we're deficient in birth control pills. There's underlying issues and I feel like that's what you're really trying to get across to people is that you have to support both sides. Again, you're not saying there's no place for modern medicine because you are in that world every day, but you're telling people, take responsibility for your health and address lifestyle as well.


Katie: To kind of wrap things up, what is the ultimate goal? You mentioned that this might be referred to as the pharmaceutical age, in hindsight. If one of us could just wave a magic wand and fix things right now, what do you think is the best case scenario with where we are of patients and doctors working together and health in America in general?

Mary Lee: Well, I think we've got to first start with the medical schools and the nursing schools and the pharmacy schools. Educating those practitioners about nutrition. Nutrition does matter. It's not just the food pyramid. It goes beyond that. We've got to educate them on how stress really affects every system in your body.
We've got to educate them on how important sleep is, and supplements. I'm a fan of supplements. I used to think it was unnecessary. That it was just expensive urine. I no longer believe that. I believe supplements are a tool and I feel like most doctors, if they understand a good quality supplement, they will use it as a tool. Remember it is a tool. It's not the answer to everything. We have to combine all this together.

I feel like education is key, but what we really have to do moving forward is the moms and dads today, they have got to stop and pause and think what they're doing to their children. What are they feeding their children? Because they're the next generation. Guess what? They were born into this. You know, I've seen the changes. I know the difference. They don't know the difference. I know it's so hard with these moms working full time and dads working too. It's so hard, but you have to start somewhere. I tell a lot of moms, at least start with what are you drinking? What are you giving those kids to drink? Give them water. When my boys would have friends to come over for spend the night, it's like, what do you want to drink? Water? Or Water? Or do you want water? That was it. We didn't have Cokes and soft drinks and juice boxes in the house. We did initially until I got educated on this. Start that simple. Just start introducing them into the fruits and vegetables. Get them involved in the kitchen. It's not that hard. It's not that hard, but you have to do it for their future health. Because they're going to be sicker than we are. They're going to be sicker ... They already are a lot sicker than we were as children.

Katie: Yeah. Exactly. That's such important advice and anybody listening that's heard my story knows that's part of my story as well. I'm so excited because it does seem like the pendulum is swinging and I feel like more and more health professionals are getting on board. More and more people are waking up to this. As much as it can seem so bleak, I really do have hope that we are on the verge of this changing. Like you said, I think moms and dads are on the front lines. I'm so excited that you were able to share all this information with them today. Since my community is very much online, can you tell people where we can find you online so that anyone who wants to stay in touch with you and read more that you've written, can find you online.

Mary Lee: Yes. As a matter of fact, Tori Kelley, she's a pharmacist that I work with in the pharmacy and I've know her since we were 18. We started a blog a few months
ago. It's called Two Hoots About Health. Two as in T-W-O, Hoots About Health. We got that name because we pledged on Chi Omega Sorority together back when we were 18 and our mascot was an owl. She wanted something to unite us that way, and so we start this blog and we send out email blasts probably about every three to four weeks at this rate right now. We're on Facebook and we're on Instagram and you can email us at info@twohootsabouthealth.com. Love to hear from you. Follow us. I think you'll like ... If you like what you've heard me discuss with Katie, you'll like the blog because we talk a lot about this and Tori's just as passionate about this as I am.

Katie: Awesome. Mary Lee, I can't thank you enough for your time. It's been so much fun to chat. I hope we'll get to do this again in more episodes in the future and I'll make sure to include all of those links in the show notes so that everyone can find you online as well.

Mary Lee: Thank you, Katie. I have had a blast. This has been such a fun opportunity and I'm just so glad that I got to know you so thank you for letting me to air it out.

Katie: Awesome. Thanks all of you for listening and we will see you next week on The Healthy Moms Podcast.