

The Crazy Wisdom Interview

with Dr. Jay Sandweiss

Synergizing Western and Eastern Approaches to Healing the Whole Person

Photography by Linda Lawson
Interviewed by Bill Zirinsky

Dr. Jay Sandweiss is one of the best-known, liveliest and most respected practitioners of integrative medicine in the Ann Arbor region. He is widely considered to be a gifted healer, and his medical practice has been overflowing almost since he opened his doors. He is Ann Arbor's quintessential raconteur as healer, or healer as raconteur. Either way, he is known as a highly capable physician with a talent for synergistic thinking and innovative treatment plans. He is also known as a guy who brings humor, a zest for living, lots of knowledge, skillful means, and compassion to his medical practice.

Sandweiss graduated from Michigan State's College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1988, and he is board certified in neuromusculoskeletal medicine and osteopathic manipulative medicine by the American Osteopathic Association. He is also board certified in medical acupuncture. He is extensively trained in Osteopathy, Applied Kinesiology, Applied Nutrition and Chinese Medicine. He has been practicing and teaching Japanese and Chinese martial arts for over thirty years, holding high black belt ranks in both Karate-do and Aikido.

Sandweiss is a funny, gentle bear of a man, with dazzling blue eyes. He can be imposing at times, but more often he is self-effacing. He is serious, skillful, mischievous, voluble, and dedicated to his craft. He lives in the Burns Park neighborhood with his wife, Sue, and their two children, Elijah and Isabel. He loves good food and drink, likes to make people laugh, and is an avid amateur actor.



Bill Zirinsky: Jay, I have known you now for more than 35 years, since we were undergraduates at the Pilot Program, which was part of the University of Michigan. And through these years, you have evolved and grown to become one of the most respected of the holistic physicians in this region of the country. Can you first take our readers through some of the steps in your own education, and in the development of your own integrated model of caring for patients?

Dr. Jay Sandweiss: At the University of Michigan, I was an undergraduate philosophy major, with minors in psychology, anthropology and English in the early 1970's. At the same time I began studying Martial Arts intensely, inspired by my interest in Taoism and Chinese Philosophy and the fact that I had been beaten up on several occasions by thugs in my middle school years. After sustaining a knee injury that did not respond to traditional allopathic diagnoses and treatment modalities, I had the great fortune to meet Dr. George Goodheart, D.C. who opened up my world to the concepts of Integrative Medicine.

I was familiar with Dr. Goodheart's writings on Applied Kinesiology well before I met him, as I had taken a book, *Touch For Health*, with me to the Orient when I went to study Martial Arts overseas in 1977. I was unaware that he had a thriving practice in the Detroit area, and was even more surprised to learn that my father had been seeing him as a patient.

In September 1978, my father gave up his scheduled appointment with Dr. Goodheart so I could be seen, hoping that he could treat my then chronic knee injury. Dr. Goodheart went right to the source of the imbalance, and was able to completely fix my knee within the week. The light went on for me. I knew then and there I wanted to be a healer/problem solver like Goodheart.

So I immediately signed up for a *Touch For Health* course taught by Bob and Joan Rose and went on that next summer to *Touch For Health* instructor training with John Thie, D.C. a disciple of Goodheart who had written the *Touch For Health* book. I taught my first *Touch For Health* class in 1979, as a benefit for my automobile injured Sensei Walter Todd in Oakland California. Back in Ann Arbor, I began teaching TFH to a wide array of people and organizations. I decided to open a bodywork healing practice based on TFH, massage, and Bach Flower Remedies at that same time.

During that time I had developed a close relationship with the late great chiropractor Norman Epstein. Norm took me as his assistant to the 100 hour Applied Kinesiology course that was taught by Dr. Goodheart in 1982. From that point forward I immersed myself in Applied Kinesiology and any other healing arts I could study.

Particularly illuminating was Goodheart's model of the "Triad of Health" in which each individual is appreciated and treated in terms of their distinct yet interdependent Structural, Biochemical, and Emotional/Spiritual conditions. My developing ability to think in terms of whole systems (or meta-paradigms), enabled me to fully embrace Goodheart's theory and practice of Applied Kinesiology. He would say, "The body never lies", and given the proper form of muscle testing inquiry, it will indicate what needs to be done to restore balance and optimal function.

My initial experience with Dr. Goodheart began what has become a 30-year journey that continues to include wonderful experiences of learning with many other masters of healing arts systems, particularly in the worlds of Osteopathic and Chinese Medicine. My

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practice today is a "multifaceted conflation" of healing arts, principles, modalities and specific techniques for getting people better.

It is said that sometimes illnesses and injuries are actually gifts that change your life for the better and put you in touch with what is truly important. In 1980 while traveling in the Yucatan on the way to Guatemala, I took ill in Palenque and eventually was bedridden for



For me healing is a precious, sacred experience. All of us are healers in our own way... I have become who I am by following my passions and practicing. I found great mentor/teachers and tried to learn whatever I could from them. Sometimes what you say to a patient is just as important as what you do for them. Sometimes it is precisely the opposite. Just do the right thing.

a week in San Cristobal de las Casas with para-typhoid fever. I had never been so ill nor so weakened. I thought I was going to die. I made a decision then that if I made it, I was going to go back to school at U-M for pre-med courses and that I would go to medical school or some equivalent. Up to that time I was uncertain what I'd ultimately do for a career. That illness focused everything for me. I've seen this happen time and again with my patients. What starts out as a big bummer results in a wonderful transformation later on.

In closing out this question I would need to talk about other important early mentors and influences on my healing path. Certainly my parents had a tremendous effect on my evolution. My father was and still is a brilliant thinker, teacher, and philosopher. My early years involved hanging around with his left-leaning political friends who would debate history, politics, and literature. In tandem with his Old World intellectualism is my father's warm loving nature. My friends always liked him and envied me for having such a "cool dad". My mother is equally loving and caring. In addition, she brought music and the arts to my life, as she herself is a singer, former oboe player and lover of the performing arts. My parents like to remind me that I may have had the healer destiny early on. As a young child I apparently rushed to the television as instructed by Oral Roberts and would put my hands on the TV to receive healing.

Frithjof Bergmann was a mentor figure for me as a young aspiring philosophy major. His lectures on Hegel, Nietzsche, Camus and existentialism, combined with his passionate politics, clearly entered my DNA during the college years.

Bill Zirinsky: You have described yourself as "having a natural tendency to synergize". Can you elaborate on that, please.

Dr. Jay Sandweiss: I have always had a "proclivity for the dialectic" and have always taken great pleasure in discovering synergies. My birth in Israel, living on a kibbutz, my first few years living in Israel and briefly in Greece before moving to the United States and being raised by quasi secular, Jewish, agnostic socialist/leftist, humanist parents likely predisposed me to a multiculturalism bent and deep curiosity. As far back as I can remember I have always tried to find the pragmatic principle behind each phenomenon, with a tendency toward identifying the universal within the particular in an accumulative manner.

Several seminal events in my personal and professional life gave me an appreciation for the power of integrating conventional allopathic medicine with complementary and alternative therapies. The most profound being the birth of my first child, Elijah, whom despite the best efforts of my wife Susan, myself, a capable and loving support team, and the best midwife in town, was not delivered at home as planned but instead required a trip to the hospital for delivery. With the help of a gracious and highly skilled team comprised of an obstetrician, an anesthesiologist, and nurses our son was delivered and perfectly born and

he came home with us ten hours later.

During my internship year in medical residency I developed a case of colitis that did not improve with medical interventions. Finally after 4 months of suffering I called my D.O. friend, Jane Harris, who had recently returned from acupuncture training in China. With one treatment of acupuncture she cured my condition. My symptoms were completely gone in 3 days!

It became clear to me then and through several other profound experiences, that integrative medicine, an approach that combines the best of traditional and non-traditional approaches, was the road that I would travel. In my practice today I make sincere attempts to figure out exactly the etiology of a patient's condition using every available diagnostic tool. This includes: modern technology and other non-conventional diagnostic systems, such as pulse and tongue diagnosis, and structural, thermal and energetic readings. I then attempt to map out algorithms of treatment that make sense and that are in harmony with my patient's belief systems and pocket book.

In general acute life-threatening conditions are best treated with allopathic modern medicine. Heart attacks, strokes, overwhelming infections, severe trauma - these types of conditions need appropriate Western Medicine interventions. Chronic conditions can be different. Often complementary and alternative therapies, diet, nutrition, herbal medicine, manual medicine, acupuncture, exercise, mind/body therapies are better suited to help the patient and with less side effects. The patient may still need to use some medications even after implementing these additional interventions but usually the number of drugs needed, the strength of the dosages needed and the frequency of the dosings can be reduced if not altogether eliminated.

Bill Zirinsky: You are known for doing very in-depth workups for your patients. And you recently told me that nowadays, because of cost containment, people are not getting the workups they need. Please talk about this issue.

Dr. Jay Sandweiss: When I was in medical training we would discuss the differential diagnoses of patient presentations and the necessary work-ups and treatments -- that would follow for a particular diagnosis -- that were proposed. It seems to me that there has been a steady decline in that approach to medicine. Probably it is due to money and/or time constraints placed on physicians who participate in restrictive health care plans that penalize them for spending extra time or money (tests) in trying to diagnose a patient.

I see patients treated only for depression or anxiety who actually have underlying medical conditions that need treatment as well... Fatigue is often blamed on depression alone. The causes of their troubled psychology may be undiagnosed B12 deficiency, thyroid disease and other issues that are often overlooked. What I see is a tendency to quickly label a patient with fibromyalgia, depression, anxiety without taking the time to dig deeper into the origin of their symptoms.

Melvyn Werbach M.D. has written wonderful evidence-based books related to the use of diet, nutrition, and herbs. One of his earlier classics Third Line Medicine, discusses the fate of many patients who do not get what they need from their visits to an HMO-type primary care doctor. He describes first, second and finally third line medicine that involves specialty testing for discovering the true causes of their medical conditions. From the point of view of being thorough with diagnostic testing, I suppose you could put me in the Third Line Medicine category. In my own practice I do a considerable amount of osteopathic manipulative medicine and acupuncture to support the nutraceutical, dietary, and herbal interventions.

BZ: In a previous conversation we had, you said to me, "It is a combination of things which bring people down, the cumulative response that breaks the camel's back". And are your extensive workups related to that fundamental insight?

The body does heal itself through a remarkable innate intelligence that it possesses for its own recovery. But sometimes it needs help from others. Certain conditions require a specific correction based on finding the specific need involved.

Dr. Jay Sandweiss: Yes. I try to figure out all the factors that are negatively influencing the patient with the intention of removing these factors from the picture. Likewise I try to identify what is lacking and needed by the patient. Some obvious examples would be identifying food and chemical sensitivities, toxicities, allergies, nutritional deficiencies, structural mal-alignments, joint motion restrictions, energetic blockages, mind/body imbalances, etc.

BZ: Recently, you described this as a "watershed time" in your life. You told me that some patients had asked you whether you had done any thinking about the fact that you're getting older, and would any of what you've been teaching get passed on to the next generations of healers?

Dr. Jay Sandweiss: Yes. I recently began the process of creating an Institute that will offer courses to health professionals and patients. The idea is to focus and distill all the tools and information I've accumulated over these past 30 years. Participants will have the opportunity to learn everything I do in organized course settings that are sequentially arranged. My hope is to have it up and running in the next five years. I've been teaching courses for 30 years. The difference here is that it will be more expansive and cover all aspects of my healing approach. Interestingly, this all began about the same time I was asked by you to give a talk at your Crazy Wisdom Bookstore for the Thursday evening Salon Series. I really enjoyed that evening and it began this new project of mine.

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BZ: You noted to me that people think “integrative medicine” is synonymous with “alternative medicine”, rather than that it is “functional medicine”. Please explain.

Dr. Jay Sandweiss: Integrative Medicine is a healing approach to patient care that integrates traditional allopathic western medicine with evidence-based complementary and alternative medical approaches. A patient with sinus disease might receive antibiotics, decongestants, mucolytics, acupuncture, herbs, nutrition, cranial manipulation, saline lavage, CT scans, dietary manipulations such as avoiding dairy and wheat. The point is that Integrative Medicine is synergistic and inclusive. It is not only alternative. Some authors like Jeffrey Bland PhD and the Institute of Functional Medicine prefer the term Functional Medicine which is also a lovely term that refers to the diagnoses and treatment of conditions based on restoring normal function physiologically and anatomically. Any diagnosis or treatment approaches that lead to accurate assessment and modalities for improving function are considered appropriate and valuable.

BZ: Would you break down for our readers why people come to you... as a trained osteopath, they come to you for neuromuscular skeletal reasons, obviously, but what else?

Dr. Jay Sandweiss: Really, anything and everything from birth to old age issues. If I was to categorize it we would be left with the various systems of the body: Pulmonary, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, uro-genital, dermatological, immune, ENT, etc. In general, patients come in to see me if they could benefit from an Integrative Medicine approach to their various health issues.

BZ: So, when people come to you, using your own terminology, sometimes you put on your “board certified cap” and sometimes you put on your “Chinese medicine cap” and sometimes your “nutritional and detoxification cap”. Please talk about that.

Sandweiss: As a board-certified licensed physician I feel a duty to first examine patients medically as I was trained to do in osteopathic medical school. Once I am confident that their situation doesn't require specific medical tests or medical treatment, other paradigms of healing can be activated, often with considerable success. I do order a lot of medical tests in my practice. Recently, a longtime patient complained of symptoms that prompted me to suspect a brain tumor which was confirmed by MRI. I see all the diagnostic and treatment approaches as tools in a toolbox that should be brought out appropriately when needed for the specific situation.

BZ: What with all the different caps you wear, and the costume changes they entail, your office must be a fun and interesting place to visit! You told me you are a closet comedian. How does that fit into your practice?

Sandweiss: I love comedy! Jokes activate healing forces. Humor is one of the great comforters. It helps us laugh and keep things in perspective. Hope, faith, patience, prayer and humor can go a long way for patients and their families. One goal of mine is to do open mike standup comedy in the near future. I tell jokes constantly in my office.

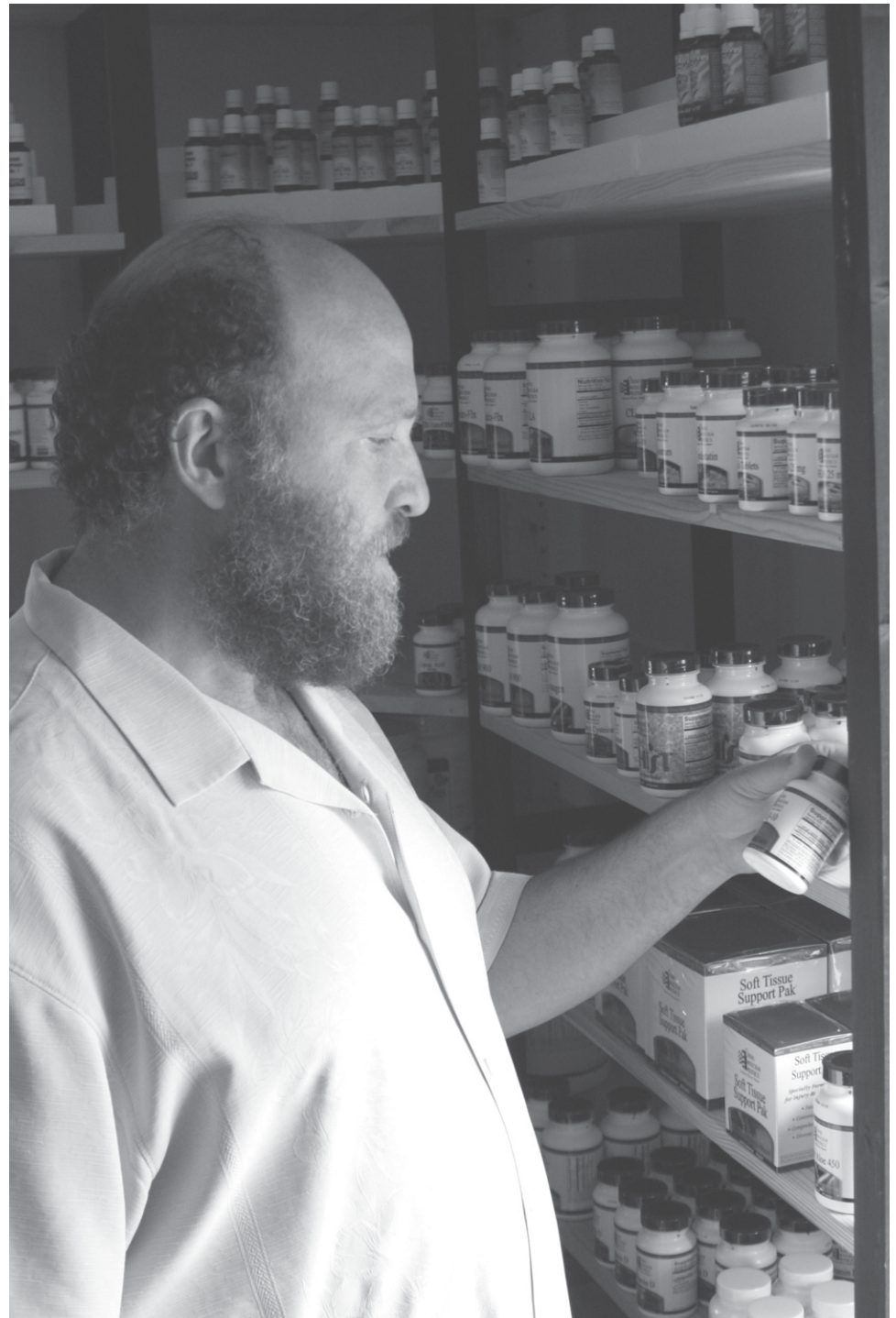
BZ: Something you said that struck me was that oftentimes people just wait for something to just get better, but that just as a car doesn't fix itself, the same is true for one's body. Can you talk more about that?

Sandweiss: Dr. Goodheart used to say in his courses, “God will forgive you but your nervous system will not!” The body does heal itself through a remarkable innate intelligence that it possesses for its own recovery. But sometimes it needs help from others. Certain conditions require a specific correction based on finding the specific need involved. If someone has iron deficiency and is feeling exhausted as their chief complaint, eventually they will need to get iron and treat the cause of their low iron if they ever hope to stop

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feeling tired. They can wait, delay, chant, but still they need iron. Injuries can displace or restrict body parts in such a way that pain is constant. Until that part of the anatomy is fixed and returned to normal functioning that person will suffer daily. The old adage is “Find it, fix it, leave it alone.”

One great insight I got from a therapist years ago is that often the real reason people do not do what they need to do to get better is that to take care of oneself, to observe a need that needs addressing and to actually do it acknowledges that your kind benevolent parent will never come, never come to take care of you. Our inner child still waits for the hero/god-like/parent to recognize our needs and provide them. Taking care of oneself is the recognition and acknowledgement that there will never be someone else to do it. For some people that acceptance is so painful that they would prefer to wait forever for that transference figure to arrive. This theme was graphically demonstrated in the Kubrick/Spielberg film *AI* (Artificial Intelligence). Amazing under-appreciated film that came and went at the theaters.



BZ: I know that you have been influenced by George Goodheart, and you've referred to the writings of John Upledger, and Andrew Weil, among others. Can you talk about each of them, and what you have learned from their work and insights? And please talk about any other teachers or mentors or thinkers who have influenced your work, and influenced your life path.

Sandweiss: I mentioned a lot about Dr. Goodheart already. Drs. Upledger and Weil I know through their books only. Several D.O.'s have greatly influenced me. The late William Johnston D.O. taught me the Functional Release Method which relies on observing tissue cues with refined palpatory techniques. More importantly he taught me about exuding health and good vibes to others. He was a consummate researcher. Fred Mitchell Jr., D.O. has been a friend and teacher since 1984. He cured me from two years of pain by fixing my dislocated 1st rib. We teach courses together with his son Kai Mitchell and I am continually amazed by Fred's breadth of knowledge of anatomy, kinesiology and biomechanics. He's a wonderful jazz musician as well. There are so many others but two other mentors stand out for me. Viola Frymann, D.O. taught me an enormous set of skills for treating children. I spent four weeks with her in 1988 at her office in La Jolla, California. I've taken several pediatric cranial courses with her as well. Dr. Frymann also taught me to never assume a condition is untreatable or fixed. So often patients are told there is nothing to do when there are many things to do.

Finally Jean-Pierre Barral, D.O., a French osteopath, has influenced my practice in deep ways. His system of Visceral Manipulation widens the arena for diagnosis and treatment. His recognition that the organs of the body have motion and can cause biomechanical problems elsewhere is critically important in finding and fixing difficult cases. I feel that Jean-Pierre Barral's work is the most advanced palpation based method around. The human hand is calibrated to appreciate the extra ordinary diversity in tissues, organs, and neural structures. Finally, I was introduced to Barral's work by my good friend and mentor Daniel Bensky, D.O. Dr. Bensky was one of the first Americans to study acupuncture in China. His acupuncture classmate Ted Kaptchuk is widely hailed as a pioneer of the American Acupuncture movement. Dan went to D.O. school as an acupuncturist and during his medical school training translated famous herbal textbooks from Chinese into English. His publishing company, The Eastland Press has promoted the works of many outstanding healers. Dan and I co-authored a chapter in 2000 that was published in *State of the Art Review* (Hanley and Belfus publishers), entitled Integrating Acupuncture and Manual Medicine. Each year I learn from Dan more connections between Osteopathy and Chinese Medicine. I am blown away by his knowledge, humility and numerous accomplishments.

BZ: I understand that there is a course at the U-M called “the sociology of the martial arts” and that you have been a guest lecturer for that course. For 35 years, you’ve been a serious student and practitioner and teacher of the martial arts. Please talk about that, and how it has impacted your medical and healing practice.

Sandweiss: Yes. Michael Kennedy is a marvelous teacher/scholar at the U-M. He created this popular new course. I’ve gone twice now to teach there. He has had several outstanding martial artist/scholars present to his class including Herbert Z. Wong, PhD who is the teacher of my teacher, Karl Scott.

I began studying Martial Arts seriously in 1974. From 1974-1984, I frequently practiced 7 days a week, 6 hours daily. Karl Scott, the head instructor of the Asian Martial Arts Studio, taught me Karate, Aikido, and Chinese Martial Arts. I spent the year 1977-1978 in Okinawa and Taiwan studying with masters of Karate and Kung-fu. In 1978 I became the head instructor of the University of Michigan Shorin-Ryu Karate Do club. I continued to teach actively there until 1987. After I opened my office in downtown Ann Arbor in 1989, I continued to teach Karate and Aikido, until this present day, at the Asian Martial Arts Studio on Fourth Avenue in downtown Ann Arbor.

BZ: Can you talk about “protecting yourself in martial arts” and how that might be helpful to a person with respect to “how to protect yourself in terms of your own health”?

Sandweiss: Chinese Medicine and Chinese Martial Arts describe a castle that protects from outside invaders. Some invasions are warded off outside the castle walls. Sometimes a strong enemy can penetrate and enter the castle. The Emperor’s guards protect inside the castle walls. All along trying to prevent a final and fatal attack of the Emperor/Empress in their private chamber. From a health point of view we have systems to ward off illness/injury. Proper life style, healthy food, restorative sleep, exercise, meditation, mindfulness,

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yoga, tai chi, acupuncture, herbs all these can help maintain balance and a strong immune system. It is a preventive model of health whereby the host works on maximizing their defensive “Wei-Qi” energy.

Martial arts teach us to avoid conflict. The Highest level is to avoid potentially dangerous situations in the first place. If confronted with an attack there is a hierarchy of responses based on the dangers presented. In other words, first avoid conflict, and then only use the appropriate force necessary to avoid harm. In extreme situations one must use lethal force. From the health stand point one would start with prevention (no smoking, proper diet, etc) and if a problem still developed one could use the least necessary medical interventions. Homeopathy, herbs, vitamins, acupuncture manual medicine. If the condition was more dangerous – then drugs, surgery, hospitalization chemo, etc.

BZ: And would you veer into the issues of a healthy immune system... the changing emphases, over the last century, between keeping the person strong enough to prevent illness versus trying to kill off various organisms which come and make you ill...

Sandweiss: Across time different emphases have been placed on the role of the host vs. vector of illness. The “cause” of illness is dependent on the specific cultural assumptions about disease. For some cultures, illnesses are the result of curses, spells, and doppelgangers. For others it is due to “sin.” Some blame emotional or spiritual imbalances. Yet others see it as a weakened physiology. Our modern scientific approach has been looking towards infectious agents (viruses, bacteria, fungi, etc) and genetics as the primary causative factors. However, there has been a resurgence of looking at host defenses. Not all people get ill from the same exposure. Our innate defensive energies play an important role.

BZ: I know that you also treat a fair number of children. I’d like to hear more about that.

Sandweiss: I love treating children. Even newborns. Their energies and physiology are very pure. Often they need cranial and myofascial treatment to release trauma patterns from birth and other subsequent injuries. Many children are injured from excessive sports and have developed adaptive patterns to avoid pain. It is a mistake to think children get better automatically because they are children. Often they develop problems of adaptation.



A sprained ankle left untreated can lead to headache or back pain later on. Also, children are often given drugs as a first approach when much less toxic approaches would work just as well.

BZ: I noticed a number of articles on your website that you had written, some of which were written for medical journals. What has been the main focus of your written work, thus far?

Sandweiss: The writings reflect my basic philosophy and practical approaches to healing. They address the use of acupuncture, osteopathic manipulation, nutrition, herbs and other modalities for getting patients better in an Integrative Medicine way. I created a special one-day course called *Worlds Collide: The Intersection of Nutritional/Herbal Medicine, Acupuncture, and Manual Medicine*. This course is my favorite as it presents all the things I do for patients in one fell swoop.

I am writing a book that I hope will appeal to patients and doctors. It will be a roadmap to healing from wherever you are. It will include case histories of people that got better from a diverse set of treatment approaches: food allergy elimination, osteopathic manipulation, nutrition, acupuncture, etc.

BZ: And do you do a certain amount of teaching, or leading of workshops, outside of Ann Arbor? And if so, to what kind of groups or organizations?

Sandweiss: I’ve been teaching courses to a wide variety of health professionals and patients for 30 years. Among them are medical doctors, osteopathic physicians, chiropractors, PTs, OTs, nurses, massage therapists, athletic trainers, psychologists, acupuncturists. I’ve been a regular presenter for the American Back Society and the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, and have presented to organizations affiliated with the above named health professions. Mostly, I teach 2-day weekend courses to groups around the country related to manual medicine.

BZ: You used to do a regular weekly radio show. Many of the broadcasts are available at your website. Tell us about that.

I love comedy! Jokes activate healing forces. Humor is one of the great comforters. I tell jokes constantly in my office.

Sandweiss: That was a lot of fun. A radio station for Arizona/New Mexico with an affiliate in Rhode Island/Massachusetts asked me to do a *Dr. Jay’s Integrative Medicine Hour* talk show. At times, I had guests appear for interviews or I just put together a talk on a specific topic. Callers were welcome to phone in questions.

BZ: Are there some other aspects to your practice and your work that you’d like to tell our readers about?

Sandweiss: I’ve reached a point where I know what I know and don’t know. I know what I like to do and not do. So I’ve assembled a large referral base for team support. If I can not personally help my patient alone, there are wonderful people in our general area who offer specialty treatments that are needed by the patients. First and foremost are the excellent medical subspecialists that practice in our area. Other non-conventional examples are: Prolotherapy, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, Roling, Neurofeedback, Homeopathy, Yoga, Gyrotonics, Psychotherapy, and Energy Work.

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BZ: What is the hardest part for you about your work life as a physician?

Sandweiss: Accepting my limitations. Realizing that I can't help everyone despite my best efforts. Also maintaining my own health and balance as I try to help others. The classic pearl here is that the lifeguard must bring the drowning person to safety without drowning himself or herself.

BZ: What is the most rewarding part of your work life as a physician?

Sandweiss: Making people feel better. Being a catalyst for positive change. A great healer, Robert Fulford, D.O. said that the highest level of healing is to help a patient find and achieve their destiny. When we are doing what we are supposed to be doing in this lifetime, things naturally fall in place. I also honor and appreciate patients letting me become a part of their lives. Knowing them and the life they lead.

BZ: Sometimes patients come to you after they've heard "there's nothing we can do"... can you talk about that?

Sandweiss: Back to Third Line Medicine. I really can't tell you how many times I've treated patients who were told, "You'll never... run again, walk again, play guitar again... live more than four months, get pregnant... So many of these people had treatable conditions that were beyond the skills and knowledge level of that treating person. The appropriate response would be to say, "I can't help you but perhaps you should seek out other methods."

BZ: You are in a very sober line of work, even as a person with a good sense of humor. How does it effect you, on a personal and spiritual level, to be doing the kind of daily work you do?

Sandweiss: Most of the time I'm involved with getting patients better. Fortunately the majority of my patients do improve after treatment. The minority of my patients are seriously ill with cancer or other life threatening illness. No matter what the situation, my approach is to relieve suffering, improve functioning, improve quality of life. As long as I feel I am doing something helpful I can usually deal with the sadness and tragic aspects of their case. But I do have a good cry at home sometimes when I am overwhelmed by the enormity of it all.

BZ: Yes, the enormity of it all. You have seen and heard so much in your years of practice, and been witness to so much. I'd be interested in hearing a few stories or anecdotes from your practice. Would you please tell us a story about one of the most meaningful relationships you've had as a doctor with one of your patients over the years? Can you tell us about the medical issues and treatment, and what was meaningful about it?

Sandweiss: Of course there are many stories to tell and each has its own special pearls.

Probably ten or fifteen years ago I was referred a teenage girl who was suffering from chronic fatigue, depression, and a weak immune system. She had missed so many days of school that the district was considering holding her back from the next grade. She was seeing a therapist and was taking an SSRI without great results. Her mother was very stressed by it all and there was a certain desperation to heal the situation. I used an integrative approach to the patient which included acupuncture, herbs, nutrition, diet changes, osteopathic manipulation, etc. These all helped but didn't really do the trick. As I got to know the patient we began to explore her dreams, her psyche, and who she really was as a person. One day I said to her (paraphrasing): "you know... I think you are an artist who is being pressured into being an engineer. You want to sing and dance and perform but everyone is trying to make you into an academic-type with a 4.0 science average so that you can get into a "top university" so you can go to med school, law school, engineering... You're a suffering artist who needs to become her true self."

Her eyes lit up, tears flowed, the room became electric. She got it. I called her therapist and told her that I thought if people would just change the context and think of her as an artist not being allowed to perform instead of a depressed non-achieving loser, things would get better. The therapist to her credit agreed. From that day forward the patient got better and in fact auditioned and began to make her living

as a performing artist. I actually saw her in a magazine a couple years later. The meaningful message is apparent here. I listened, we developed a relationship where she was truly heard and understood. The patient was not compartmentalized and looked at as only a set of signs and symptoms. Treating her as a unique human being was the cure in this case. People need to be and become who they are, and not try to be what others want to make them be.

About that same time maybe 15 years ago a patient came to me who was the CEO of her own company. She was diagnosed with sero-negative rheumatoid arthritis. Every morning she couldn't move her fingers for 30-45 minutes. She loved to crochet, needlepoint and the like but was unable to do it anymore. She had small grandchildren that she wanted to hold but couldn't because of her pain. She had had some unpleasant side effects with prescription drugs and was looking for direction but was at the same time a bit skeptical. We talked at length and at the end of our first session I recommended that she get extensive food

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sensitivity testing. She was reluctant at first but complied. Ironically her test of over 150 food and spices showed only 2 sensitivities: green beans and chocolate. I went over her results and she was upset with everything.

She felt that the results were absurd, she had wasted her money and after that session never rescheduled to see me again. I felt the "kill the messenger" vibes quite strongly but resolved to just let things be.

Many months later I received a lovely card from her that basically said: "When you gave me the results of my food tests I thought I had been a fool to take the tests in the first place. I resisted doing anything for several months. Finally one day I decided to try eliminating green beans and chocolate. It was a miracle. Within a few weeks my hands became normal. I could stitch again and play with my grandchildren. Just to see if it was all coincidence, I reintroduced chocolate. Oh my God all my symptoms returned immediately! Now I have quit those 2 items and I feel great. You've changed my life. I thank you so much and I apologize for not coming back and waiting so long to contact you."

This case taught me to realize that sometimes no news is good news. Sometimes you need to just have faith that things will work out in their own time. On a more practical level it demonstrated the often-overlooked issue of food reactions that are very common and can generate almost any symptoms. Hers was a case of "Allergic arthralgia" that was discussed years ago in *The Lancet* medical journal.

BZ: Those are both very interesting stories. I feel particularly moved by the first story, since you so clearly, and in a strikingly simple way, positively impacted that young woman's life. Can you also tell our readers a story one of the saddest or most heart wrenching of the stories from your medical practice or from your doctor/patient relationships?

Sandweiss: There have been many sad stories. Whenever people die before they had a chance to live a long full life it is sad. Suicides despite good psychiatric care, fatal accidents, cancers in children and young adults, families losing a spouse, parent or child, fatal genetic diseases... all these events are devastating and leave you changed forever. I lost a very near and dear friend to colon cancer. He was a great local healer who I had always considered the healthiest person I knew. He ran marathons, swam, ate well, didn't smoke. Basically he lived the life we all believe will keep us healthy and let us live to old age. After a routine physical he was discovered to have colon cancer and about a year later I was carrying his coffin. He was in his early 40s. I realized yet again that truth that there are no guarantees. "No one gets out of life alive". We have to live each day with appreciation. It can be difficult to do that. But it is always the best thing to do.

BZ: And finally, Jay, can you tell us one of the most richly satisfying stories from your medical practice, or from the relationships you've had over these many years, as a doctor, with one of your patients...



Sandweiss: So so many satisfying, wonderful stories. I was called to help a newborn who was unable to move her jaw. She was being fed through an eyedropper. Her homebirth on the outskirts of Ann Arbor was traumatic and the poor little baby girl was flexed into a tight ball, jaundiced, and not moving her limbs. I could not understand why the parents had not gone to the hospital. I was very nervous but was assured by my friend that these were truly great parents and not litigious types. I took a few moments to hear the words of Dr. Viola Frymann, D.O. who had taught me how to treat newborns. I figured I'd go see the baby and if she really needed transport to the hospital, I would tell the parents that.

To make a very long and wonderful story short... I began to use osteopathic cranial procedures with the little girl. Her mouth began to move, her eyes opened and then during a huge myofascial release her arms flung out, legs stretched, and she uttered a huge scream. The room was so thick with love and awe. The grandparents, parents, friends all wept with joy as she went to her mother's breast and nursed for the first time. I have remained a part of her life to this day and had the great joy of attending her high school graduation party this summer. At that party, her grandmother, parents and I recounted this incredible story and how wonderful it was to see this beautiful young woman heading off to college this Fall.

BZ: Thank you for those very fine and evocative stories. You mentioned to me that you "like good food and drink". And you've been a judge for the *Ann Arbor Observer*, judging and ranking beers. I'm interested in hearing more about that.

Sandweiss: Quite a while ago, David Bloom asked me to join a group of Judges to taste microbrews from this geographical area. I've also participated in some non-formal wine tastings, and sun-dried tomato tastings. Good food, drink, and company make for the best of times. Add live entertainment to that and you're living the dream.

BZ: And your favorite restaurants in town? Where do you love to eat?

Sandweiss: Ann Arbor has so many great places to dine. It goes through cycles for me. My current favorites are Logan, Pacific Rim, Eve, Yotsuba, West End Grill, Zingerman's Roadhouse, Renaissance Bistro (Dexter), and the Chop House for the big-city service followed by dessert next door at La Dolce Vita.

BZ: You have appeared in a number of theatre productions of the Burns Park Players. I saw you in *Fiddler on the Roof*. What parts have you played in those productions?

Sandweiss: My first role was in *Carousel* as the captain of the whaling ship (Blow High, Blow Low...) I had minor parts in *Damn Yankees* and *Annie*. One of my favorite parts was bass singer for the Barbershop quartet in *The Music Man*. More small parts and barber shop singer in *Bye Bye Birdie*, and *Brigadoon*. Then came Lazar Wolf in *Fiddler*, small parts in *Oliver* and finally the baker in *Beauty and the Beast*.

As you know, the Burns Park Players shows have evolved over the years into fantastic local theater productions. Thanks to the wise and brilliant guidance of producer Susan Hurwitz and the direction that followed, Burns Park parents and often their children have been able to partake in extremely high quality musical theater productions. Susan Hurwitz is now at Pioneer High School producing amazing shows. Did you see the *Willy Wonka* production this spring? Every aspect of the show was stunning!

BZ: You and your wife, Sue, live in Ann Arbor. How old are your kids?

Sandweiss: Our son, Elijah, will be 18 in December. He is a senior at Pioneer High School. Our daughter, Isabel, will be 13 in October. She begins 7th grade at Tappan. I had the wonderful opportunity of being in the above named shows with my children.

I really can't tell you how many times I've treated patients who were told, "You'll never ... run again, walk again, play guitar again... live more than four months, get pregnant..." So many of these people had treatable conditions that were beyond the skills and knowledge level of that treating person. The appropriate response would be to say, "I can't help you but perhaps you should seek out other methods."

BZ: What has been most rewarding about your family life in the last few years?

Sandweiss: We got a phenomenal dog, Tramp (a labradoodle), who is everyone's favorite. The children have continued to grow and mature into lovely, articulate, interesting people. Our house is often a gathering place for our children's friends. We really like having all the kids around, their energy is exciting and they are all really great kids.

BZ: Where do you four most like to vacation together?

Sandweiss: We have been going to the same area, north of Harbor Springs for the past 15 years or so. Lake Michigan, like all the Great Lakes and large bodies of water is all about the watching of the water, being in the water, listening to the waves and breathing the air. Every season has its mood and the effect is always invigorating and yet relaxing.

BZ: What are you most looking forward to about the coming year?

Sandweiss: So many things... Elijah graduating from high school, a first-time for us Caribbean Cruise in February with other families of graduating seniors, Michigan Foot-

No matter what the situation, my approach is to relieve suffering, improve functioning, improve quality of life. As long as I feel I am doing something helpful I can usually deal with the sadness and tragic aspects of their case. But I do have a good cry at home sometimes when I am overwhelmed by the enormity of it all.

ball, working again with the Tappan Players as a drama coach for the middle schoolers, possible teaching events in Brazil, Greece, Hong Kong and Malaysia. Teaching the work of Dr. Goodheart for the Cleveland Clinic in February 2009. Treating and working with my patients for optimum health.

BZ: Any closing thoughts, Jay.

Sandweiss: For me healing is a precious, sacred experience. All of us are healers in our own way. All of us can learn to heal. Some are born with special gifts of potential that need to be actualized by focused practice. I have become who I am by following my passions and practicing. I found great mentor/teachers and tried to learn whatever I could from them. Sometimes what you say to a patient is just as important as what you do for them. Sometimes it is precisely the opposite. Just do the right thing.

What a privilege to do this interview. Thanks.

BZ: Thank you very much, Jay.

