



Real Women's Healthcare – A Missing Link

Author : Shirley Wright, LMT, RMT

For years, I stressed about healthcare. In my little, rural town, gynecologists are known to come and go more quickly than the weather changes here in Maine. Each year, I'd see someone different, and I'd dread that yearly visit. A few years ago, a lady who worked with my husband suggested to him that I check out Women to Women, a clinic in Yarmouth that specialized in Women's healthcare. I went there and met Carrie Levine and felt so lucky to do so. Last year, when I went for my annual visit, Carrie let me know that she was leaving Women to Women and opening [her own clinic](#) in Newcastle, ME. I worried about what to do but called her a few weeks ago and set up my first appointment. I am feeling lucky again.



A trip to the gynecologist used to be dreaded; now it's an adventure. I left home early on the morning of my appointment and headed to Newcastle, which my GPS showed as a little over two hours from my home. My appointment was at 10:30 but I wanted to get there early, in case I took a wrong turn. As I always do on a long drive, I stopped for a cup of decaf coffee to enjoy on the way. I took my time and went the scenic route through Augusta and out toward the coast. As I got closer to my destination, I stopped at a little country store and found some neat Christmas gifts for my sons-in-law. Then, I explored downtown Damariscotta while I waited for my appointment time. I decided to come back to an interesting store called Rising Tides. I also spied an antique mall where I would later buy a beautiful set of pink depression glass. As my appointment time neared, I headed out the residential road toward my destination.

On the left of the road, I saw the sign "Whole Woman Health" and slowed to turn in the long driveway. Signs directed me to the office location, which is in an outbuilding beside Carrie's beautiful home. The area is quiet and calm, and I'm sure there's a tang of the ocean at certain times of the year. I parked and followed the sign to enter and came into the office, which is neat, clean and informative with books lining the shelves of the waiting area. On one table, I saw a pot of hot water with herbal tea bags and bottled water just waiting. There is also a nice, clean bathroom, which is essential after a long drive. I looked around and then sat down. In just a few minutes, Carrie came down the stairs to greet me. There's no nurse to meet you, just the provider. I felt calm at once.



We chatted a few minutes and then headed upstairs, where Carrie has her office and treatment area. I gave her all of my paperwork that is required for a first visit. She remembered me and my health history from Women to Women but asked me to sit down as she perused my paperwork. She asks for a detailed health history at the first visit, and I was able to download all of the paperwork from her website and have completely filled out before the visit. I like that because I can think as I write things down, and I can make sure it's complete. She asked me a few questions about my paperwork. I also gave her all of my most recent blood work and my last PAP results. She was glad to have all of that without having to request it from another provider. Then, we talked about what I most wanted from this visit. As it turns out, I didn't really want a physical exam on this first visit. I had just had one in January. So, Carrie suggested we postpone that until my next visit and use the time I had to talk about my concerns. Imagine that! I had an uninterrupted hour (and it turned out to be a little longer than that) for me with an expert in women's health. It was wonderful.

We talked about my health concerns – which for me focus on celiac disease and the multiple chemical sensitivities that I've developed over the last ten years. The two seem to go hand in hand for many, I have learned through research. We talked about gluten and its deadly effects on my body, before I totally eliminated it. Carrie shared with me that current research is also pointing to the fact that dairy is chemically similar to gluten, as far as digesting the proteins. I frowned. I don't eat a lot of dairy but I do eat some. Mostly, the creamer that goes in my decaf coffee is milk based. I didn't like the thought of giving this up. Carrie suggested that I get through the holidays and then go dairy-free for three weeks. She said that the intermittent stomach issues I'm having (and they are few compared to year's past) might be caused by dairy, which digests more slowly in the gut. I know that I can completely eliminate foods as I've been on elimination diets for the past five years. I agreed that I'd try it, after the holidays.

Then, we talked about leaky gut. As a by-product of celiac disease, I've been blessed with an extreme case of leaky gut. Leaky gut is actually a weakened stomach lining that allows food and other chemicals to pass out of the gut and into the bloodstream before they are ready to do so. It is the cause of many autoimmune disorders and other illnesses. The blood is not a good place to deal with undigested food and other toxins and can result in illness. My issue with wheat went undetected for so long that my stomach or gut lining is very compromised and very weak. I can't often tolerate probiotics, at least not in large or therapeutic doses, at least not yet. I am still building my stomach lining. It will take years. Carrie suggested that I reintroduce L-Glutamine powder to my diet. L-Glutamine does many things but one of these things is repair the gut lining. I took it a few years ago but stopped it when I had trouble with excess bile. I agreed that it was time to reintroduce L-Glutamine.

Then, we talked about multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). This has been big issue for me over the past few years. MCS is the inability of the body to assimilate toxins, for me the worst has been perfumes or other manufactured scents. If I am in a room with a fragrant candle burning or with someone wearing strong perfume, I develop an asthma-like reaction. In just a few minutes, I can't breathe well. From there, I start to feel extremely nauseous and I get anxious, which can go straight to panic. My body does whatever it needs to get me away from the scent. Carrie and I talked about the fact that the liver processes toxins, including scents. If I am not able to process these, then my body is not getting the toxins out in an effective way. I



agreed. However, with someone like me, who has been through so many digestive issues and is now mending and feeling stronger and better, a liver cleanse is not the answer. Carrie started to brainstorm those enzymes in the liver that actually process toxins. She quickly went to her computer and started to read to me about Glutathione.

Glutathione is involved in many processes in the body, including tissue building and repair, making chemicals and proteins needed in the body, and for the immune system. It is a chemical that helps the body process toxins. Carrie talked about the fact that some people take this as a supplement but that was not the preferred route to take it, especially for me with my stomach issues. She said that with me, her preference would be to bypass my stomach and get this more quickly into my bloodstream. I was perplexed at this point and asked her how. She smiled and said, "[Apothecary by Design](#) will figure that out."

Carrie works with a pharmacy in Portland called Apothecary by Design, and they are just that. This pharmacy actually makes medications on a person by person basis, to meet the needs of her customers. She wrote out a prescription for me and asked them to make me a glutathione cream that was gluten and nut free. She told me to start slowly with it by rubbing a dab of it on my arm or hand once a day. If I could tolerate it with no negative side effects, she told me to work up to the dose they suggested to get in up to 30 MI per day. I agreed to try it.

When my hour was up (and it turned into an hour and a half), Carrie told me to email her if I had any questions. She explained that email support was included in my visit. (No other healthcare provider had ever told me that.) She also told me to let her know how I was doing with the MCS issue and the dairy elimination near the end of January, first of February, by email. She offered a follow-up at any time. I left with a plan and felt completely satisfied with her knowledge and with my visit. I will go back and know that I still have her on my tea. By going to her in Newcastle, she is even more focused on my health needs than she was at Women to Women. She still has access to the support sites used at the Yarmouth clinic, but she did not push the supplements like Women to Women did. (I never felt comfortable with that line of their business or with the ingredients in some of their supplements. I also had a bad reaction to a couple.)

As far as payment, Carrie charges \$200 for an initial visit and then \$100 per visit after that. She does offer phone consultations at \$50 per 15 minutes. She does not take insurance but will give each client a receipt that can be submitted to insurance for reimbursement. My insurance will not reimburse me, but many others will. For me, I don't care at this point. I can get substandard health care that is paid for, at least a once a year physical. My insurance company will not reimburse for anyone who is not "in network." Carrie said she hopes to concentrate on her patients, not jump through insurance hoops. Those providers who are jumping through insurance hoops are also offering the healthcare that insurance provides and dictates. Often, that's a 15-minute physical and a handful of prescriptions. That's not for me. I believe that if we paid for our more minor healthcare, and were billed the true cost which is really not that high, we could break this crazy chain of insurance monopoly, but that's another story for another time.

I am thrilled to have moved my healthcare visits to Whole Woman Health. There is nowhere else that I can go to have someone focus on my needs, to sit in a chair beside me and ask me



how my physical and emotional health is, and to have someone support who I am and what I believe. It was wonderful, and I would recommend Carrie to any woman who has health issues, needs or questions. You are worth it! Carrie is knowledgeable, caring, and dedicated to women's health. She listens and strategizes with her patients. She knows all of the current recommendations for the best health planning and is not afraid to suggest something new. She did not push supplements or prescriptions on me. She told me some options and said that if I didn't like those options, we'd find new options. Most memorable on her intake paperwork was the question, "How long has it been since you felt good?" If your answer to that is more than a day or two, I would urge you to set up a visit with Carrie. Her website can be found at www.wholewomanhealthcare.com and her contact number is 207-563-7000. Carrie is located at 608 River Road in Newcastle, ME.

As an aside, I need to mention two other critical areas of support in my health journey. The first is my husband, Peter, who is a [Nutritional Therapy Practitioner](#). Peter has spent hours testing me for various things and has helped me learn that I have adrenal fatigue. I am currently taking a supplement from Biotics that Peter located by lingual-neuro testing. It is called Biotics NeoNatal MultiGland and offers adrenal support. Carrie gave that her stamp of approval. Through blood testing, I have also learned that I suffer from iron deficiency, which is common for those with celiac disease. Peter researched and found another Biotics supplement called Biotics B12/Folate Plus which also helps the body assimilate and produce iron. I have done well with these supplements. Often, I have severe side effects to supplements due to different allergies, most problematic are gluten and nuts. Biotics offers a full line of supplements that are all clean (no preservatives or dyes) and that are all gluten and nut free. I am also happy that the nutritional therapy philosophy is that supplements should be taken to correct a bodily insufficiency, not taken forever. I will continue to work with Peter to add Vitamin D liquid and L-Glutamine to my daily routine. I prefer Biotics supplements because I have not had any negative side effects from their clean formulas. For me, supplements must be introduced one at a time, and very slowly.

The other interesting partner in my health plan is [Apothecary by Design](#). Carrie wrote a prescription to them as I sat in her office. She explicitly wrote "Gluten and Nut Free" on it and asked for a transdermal cream, not a pill. The next day, Apothecary by Design called me. They told me what they had in mind to make specifically for me and what the cost would be. They told me that when I was ready, they would fill the prescription. Then, they quoted me the cost and checked to see if my insurance would cover any of that cost. I ended up ordering the cream and it came in the mail a few days later, with no additional shipping charge. I am now on day two of rubbing a small amount of this cream on my hand. Time will tell if it helps with the scent sensitivity.

I feel truly lucky to have so many partners in my health. When I think back a few years, I was scared. I had health concerns, and no one would listen. I remember going to the gynecologist in Dover and telling her that I wanted to talk to her about a couple of issues and she told me to lie down. I said that I didn't want a pap smear at that time and she told me that I was going to have one. I lay back on the table and pleaded with her as the speculum found its mark – it was cold and harsh. I had tears in my eyes, and I vowed that I'd die before I'd be treated like that again. As I sat there, and this doctor wrote me prescriptions that I didn't want and looked at her



watch; I'd taken the full 15 minutes. I got up and left. I dropped the prescriptions in the trash on the way out, and I didn't go back to the doctor until I found the clinic in Yarmouth.

My life has changed since then, and the healthcare that I am accessing just continues to get better and better. I am not a slave to what my insurance dictates. I'll take care of myself as best that I can. Thank you, Carrie, for offering this service. I don't care if you ever take insurance. I am going to invest in myself, and I am glad you are a partner in that investment. I am truly blessed to have a [Nutritional Therapy Practitioner](#) on my side as well as a pharmacy that will make what I need. Feel free to contact me with questions or concerns that you may have. I am not a doctor and only share my journey to help others. May your health journey be as positive as mine has become. For more information, check out our website at www.healingcenterofmaine.com