Book review

Living well with multiple sclerosis


THIS BOOK includes personal narratives of 12 individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS) who have made intensive lifestyle changes with significant benefits.

In each story/chapter, in addition to the key lifestyle changes of 1) nutrition (low saturated fat), 2) vitamin D supplementation, 3) exercise and 4) meditation, each person adopts and embraces one or more components in a way that particularly resonates with them, either in terms of their personality, or in relation to a particular talent they possess. For example, a musician who loses flexibility in his fingers and hands practises visualisation of finger movement intensively; a psychologist adapts well to self-hypnosis.

Of interest were the narratives of three doctors who develop MS (two early in their careers and one midway through her career as a pathologist), all of whom, after navigating significant health challenges, reshape and return to successful and productive employment.

The personalities of all these people display a high level of motivation and willingness to adapt to intensive lifestyle changes over a long period of time. It may be viewed that only “successful” narratives are included, yet these stories reveal an insight into the multitude of personal challenges and emotional highs and lows faced by an individual in the context of MS intruding into his or her life. Drugs are “part of the package” in a number of the stories, in conjunction with lifestyle changes; however, the real focus is on maintaining autonomy, a positive outlook and regaining control. The sometimes convoluted paths to achieve this, and the struggles entailed, are very real.

The book concludes with a discussion by George Jelinek on the rationale for the four domains of lifestyle, as well as some discussion of the key turning points in each individual’s story. This book, which provides valuable insights and stimulating reading, is suitable for doctors and patients, as well as patients’ carers, family and friends. These stories of hope, inspiration and sustained lifestyle change speak loudly.

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