



Fresno Family Practice
CENTER

Anti-Aging Medicine

What does Dr. Work mean by it?

Many of you know that I go to Las Vegas during the first weekend in December of every year to attend the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine (A4M) Conference. This year it will be held at the Mandalay Bay hotel casino over December 3rd through the 5th. I will be “sitting” for my oral exam to be certified by the A4M as knowledgeable in the exciting new field of anti-aging medicine. I always have a wonderful and exciting time, learning the latest research findings and treatments for the many aspects of aging. By the way, anyone who is interested may attend either the entire conference or may just go to the vendors’ portion. Go to www.worldhealth.net for more information or to see some of the latest science findings on anti-aging.

One aspect of anti-aging medicine that I want you to be aware of is what it actually is. Many people, including physicians, consider anti-aging medicine to be nothing more than vanity to its highest degree. I have seen ads in the local newspaper for physicians who “do” anti-aging medicine and then I look at the services offered by them...all cosmetic procedures from face peels to liposuction to breast lifts with fat implants. However, I think that is a very narrow view and this perception (perpetuated by some physicians) continues to give anti-aging medicine a bad name. Don’t misunderstand me...I also perform some cosmetic procedures, some you know about and others you perhaps have never heard of before, but cosmetics are not the “end all to end all” for anti-aging medicine.

A broader view of anti-aging medicine is a more accurate picture of this exciting field of medicine. Some providers use phrases, including “wellness medicine” and “successful aging”, but they use them to mean something else. That is why it is important that you understand the definition of the term the way that the A4M, of which I am a member, defines it.

Basically, what we are talking about here is *functioning*. As an individual grows older, the level of functioning declines, e.g., cannot walk as well, not able to work as fast or as much, etc. The goal of anti-aging medicine is to increase that level of functioning to allow the individual to enjoy the latter part of life with the vigor, strength and stamina of someone many years younger. If the program is started at an early enough age, a youthful appear-

ance is preserved without the use of cosmetics...but more importantly, the individual’s internal organs are “younger” and function at a more youthful level.

Modern medicine has been able to determine the events that happen in an individual as they grow older. We know, for example, that both men and women go through a slowing down or cessation of their sex hormone production as they become older. We call it *menopause* for women and *andropause* for men. If we anticipate this event and begin immediate correction when it occurs, then untold health benefits will be reaped, including a maintaining of muscle mass and an overall improvement in the level of functioning. So good anti-aging medicine will try to slow down, prevent and reverse *some* of these age-related changes. Make no mistake about it...this is not the panacea for aging, i.e., you will continue to age and you will eventually die. But how long that will take and the degree of decline in functioning are the variables that you can affect with proper diet, exercise, supplements, hormones and medications that are tailored to your individual needs. Unfortunately, there is no “off the shelf” fountain of youth pill that works for everyone.

If taking a blood pressure or cholesterol pill is practicing preventive medicine, i.e., it prevents you from having a heart attack, then anti-aging medicine is “Olympic-level” preventive medicine. By doing so, we hope to increase the level of functioning that elderly people have to allow for a higher quality of life until the very end of life.

There are two caveats to the practice of anti-aging medicine: **1.** The sooner you start doing this from the age of 25 years old onward, the better off you will be; and **2.** Medical insurance companies do not cover the majority of anti-aging medicine practices.

As to the first, it makes the most sense that if you begin doing things that increase your bone density or lean muscle mass, the sooner you start doing it the more you have as you enter your “twilight” years and the less you have to play “catch up”. As to the second, insurance companies consider anti-aging medicine to be a “lifestyle” choice so they won’t pay for the medications, even though we have much research demonstrating the positive benefits. The only exceptions to that currently are hormonal therapies.

So, if the idea of living at a higher level of functioning and wellness than your peers interests you, then you have come to the right place.