

Dr. Mimi Guarneri's PEARLS OF WISDOM

By Judith A. Habert

IN THE TEN YEARS THAT I HAVE been publishing San Diego Woman Magazine, I can honestly say that I have never come across anyone quite like Mimi Guarneri, MD, FACC, ABOIM, who is board-certified in Cardiovascular Disease, Internal Medicine, Nuclear Cardiology and Integrative Holistic Medicine. I had spoken to colleagues of hers, patients who swore by her, and nurses who had worked with her. Even their songs of praise did not affect me quite as much as the 60 minutes or so that I spent a few weeks ago talking with her and getting to know not only the physician, but the woman behind the title.

Within just a few moments of meeting, we had ascertained that there was a common bond in that we were both native New Yorkers and of Italian decent, but that wasn't it. That was but an added plus in that we almost immediately understood each other and communicated as perhaps only two New Yorkers can, but there was still something so special and so unique that it took a while for me to figure out what it was.

Here I was sitting across from a renowned doctor who has accomplished so much throughout her life. Dr. Guarneri speaks at conferences with thousands of attendees. She has written wonderful books, published many articles, appeared as an expert source on radio and TV programs and is even slated to be a speaker at the Vatican this coming November at an event sponsored by the World Health Organization, UCSD and Miraglo Foundation. There she sat across from me when I realized what it was...she cares from such a profound place, for each

and every patient she sees. She listens, but more importantly, she hears. As an Integrative Cardiologist, Dr. Guarneri is often faced with critical and acute care scenarios. She is called upon to make tough decisions, life, and death choices, with little room for error. What she has learned, and very well I might add, is that more goes into her profession than just treating patients in an acute care condition. She has applied many years of clinical study and research on the mind-body-spirit connection for creating optimal health, wellness and healing outcome and has incorporated these elements into her practice to make a difference, and most importantly, to save lives. The term "Integrative Cardiologist" was coined by Dr. Guarneri when her practice began to change to an Integrative approach.

Dr. Guarneri came to San Diego in 1994 to work at Scripps Clinic as an Interventional Cardiologist. This specialty focuses on acute care, such as placing stents in arteries. Dr. Guarneri was often faced with very sick patients; some whom had basically received a death sentence due to the severity of their health condition. Dr. Guarneri didn't believe these sentences to be true. She learned that by incorporating some healthy habits into their everyday life, the likelihood of developing heart disease could be significantly deterred.

"I would put in about 750 stents per year while at Scripps. I'd see many repeat patients. I just knew there had to be a better way to treat these patients so that they wouldn't continue to be in need of my services --and possibly never need to be in the care



of a cardiologist in an acute situation," explains Dr. Guarneri.

"I became interested in the work that Dr. Dean Ornish was doing. I would put stents in and then run across the parking lot to Dr. Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease, a lifestyle change program, and studied the work he was doing. Rauni Prittinen King, RN was the Nurse Case Manager for the research study, and we were both realizing the huge differences made by the lifestyle change program for the patients. Rauni had been an intensive care nurse for more than 20 years. She, too, was aware of the rising population of "frequent fliers" that she would see as return patients with cardiac incidents to the ICU. Dr. Guarneri remarked, "We would put these patients on vegetarian diets, teach them yoga and meditation, place them into support groups and get them up and moving and doing some exercise. The results were phenomenal. With these lifestyle changes, we saw a 91% decrease in chest pain, cholesterol levels went down, triglycerides went down, and they lost significant amounts of weight. Most importantly, by and large, their coronary disease had been reversed."

This proved to Dr. Guarneri exactly what she had believed for a very

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long time, which was that you could not just treat the symptom without attacking the underlying problem. She said, "Certainly, as a cardiologist when you are faced with a patient suffering from an acute event, such as a stroke or a heart attack, Conventional Medicine's approach is the only way to go. You need to get the patient to a trauma center like Scripps, Sharp, UCSD and others where they are trained in critical care, and can immediately deal with the current crisis." Dr. Guarneri felt that part of the problem was that medical schools trained doctors in the acute care model, but little to no emphasis was placed on training for prevention of coronary disease.

One of the other issues which Dr. Guarneri was witnessing more regularly was that when a patient went to a physician with a medical complaint that resulted in a diagnosis such as diabetes or high blood pressure, the answer was always the "ill to the pill" approach. Each diagnosis resulted in a prescription for medicine to treat the problem, with physicians not asking the question 'why does this patient have high blood pressure and what can we do to reverse it?' In defense of physicians, this was not a fault of your doctor, but more the fault of the system, which required that a physician sees a minimum number of patients per day for them to operate

in the black. So, what took more time: writing a prescription for medication or discussing the basics of nutrition and how it applies to the disease they developed and what they would have to do to correct the problem? Dr. Guarneri shares, "The minute that became really clear to me, I realized that it was necessary for us to teach health providers differently. Not to say that what we learned in school is bad, it is great for acute care, but we need a model that really embraces the best of acute care and then how do we prevent disease and get to underlying cause so we can start to reverse the process."

Dr. Guarneri saw that a way to fix the system was to recognize that our method of healing was not the only way to improve the health of our population. She explained, "Of course, we prided our medical schools for teaching our new doctors state of the art heart technology which we knew was critical to our patients, but part of their healing process might also include the many wonders we could learn from other global traditions. Conventional Medicine is just one of many global healing traditions. There is Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ayurvedic Medicine from India and Homeopathy and Naturopathic Medicine, which have their own healing properties."

After seeing the amazing results that could be achieved through

non-traditional modalities, Dr. Guarneri knew that she owed it to the medical profession, and particularly to heart disease sufferers everywhere to bring this education to the medical community. She and Rauni decided through their own experiences and those of Dr. Ornish --and others they followed, that it was time for them to make a proposal to Scripps Hospital to create an innovative and groundbreaking program. Shortly thereafter, with some generous benefactors and the blessings of Scripps, their dream became a reality, and Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine was born. As the medical director of the center, Dr. Guarneri saw the importance of bringing education to physicians, as well as the public who were yearning for something besides a prescription drug solution to every health problem. The Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine offered the best of Conventional and Complementary Medicine. This is based upon the belief that there exist many paths to healing and that holistic health is a cohesive balance of mind, body, and spirit. They recognized the wisdom of all healing traditions and incorporated them as appropriate into individualized care plans. Dr. Guarneri notes, "We realized one of the problems was that physicians needed to be educated in Integrative approaches. They need-



ed to think differently, so we started to create large conferences such as 'Natural Supplements: An Evidence-Based Approach,' which is going into its 15th year. We have people from all over who attend. This is now considered one of the biggest Integrative Health and Medicine conferences in the world, hosting over 1,000 people from around the world."

The Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine grew tremendously over the years, but Dr. Guarneri's desire to bring Integrative Medicine to the forefront of the medical community was even greater than this center. Her desire was to make San Diego a hub for Integrative Health and Medicine. She was instrumental in the decision made by Bastyr University to open their new site in San Diego. Bastyr University is a pioneer in science-based natural medicine and one of the leading health arts and sciences universities in the world, with programs for Naturopathic Medicine, Nutrition, Public Health, Herbal Sciences and more.

Dr. Guarneri realized one of her dreams when she founded The Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine (AIHM) in 2013. A great way to describe the AIHM is with the mission statement, which reads, "The Academy provides critical resources to support collaboration between practitioners working to transform our disease care model into one that serves the whole person—body, mind, spirit—and beyond to include community and the planet." The AIHM is an innovative educational organization dedicated to engaging a global community of health professionals and health seekers in training, leadership, interprofessional collaboration, research, and advocacy. She currently serves as President of the AIHM.

Integrative Medicine did not earn its board certification from the American Board of Physician Specialties (ABPS) until 2014. Dr. Guarneri sits on the founding board. I asked how the climate has changed with traditional doctors' views of Integrative

Medicine since the certification efforts began in 1996. She said, "By in large physicians are really disenchanted now. They are unhappy with 10-minute appointments, and they don't feel they can provide the care they want to provide. Look at the statistics of physician depression, alcoholism, suicide. It is really scary. There is a lot of discontent. I wrote a book a few years ago dealing with this problem entitled Total Engagement – The Healthcare Practitioner's Guide to Heal Yourself, Your Patients and Your Practice. It is a book that teaches them how to reinvent themselves."

Four years ago, Dr. Guarneri took an even bigger leap toward her total belief in the importance of Integrative Medicine. She and Rauni founded both Guarneri Integrative Health, Inc. and Pacific Pearl La Jolla. Dr. Guarneri, who serves as Medical Director, explains, "I wanted to build an Integrative health and wellness facility to provide excellent healthcare in the middle of La Jolla. I also wanted to blend things that Conventional Medicine doesn't always understand. Here at The Pearl, you see not only a Medical Doctor, but a Naturopathic Doctor during your 90-minute first visit. We don't do 10-minute appointments at Pacific Pearl. We need to get to know our patients before we can treat them. One of our first questions to a new patient is, 'What is your idea of success?' One patient's response was simply 'to wake up in the morning and not feel pain,' but the answers vary. In the current 10-minutes per patient traditional medical care model, it is very easy to label people, and give them drugs. It's not so easy to get people motivated and get them started on creating health. We need to get people back in charge of their lives. That is why I wanted to create a center where I could continue to practice medicine, continue to teach doctors, and have doctors from all areas work together under one roof. We do not have to send our patients all over town for the different needs they may have. We give

each patient our personal email and cell phone, so we are always close by to help our patients, no matter what they need."

At Guarneri Integrative Health, Inc., local patients are joined by those traveling from across the globe to be assessed and treated by Dr. Guarneri and her team of experts in cutting edge Conventional, Integrative and Natural Medicine. Pacific Pearl La Jolla is also home to several organizations, in addition to Guarneri Integrative Health, Inc. They include the Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine (AIHM), Holistic and Integrative Medicine Resources, Inc. (HIMR), Miraglo Foundation, Consciousness and Healing Initiative (CHI) and a fully-equipped video/live-streaming space for education, workshops and conferences.

To help patients get back in charge of their own lives, Dr. Guarneri recently released her latest book entitled, 108 Pearls to Awaken Your Healing Potential. In it, she blends modern science and ancient wisdom to offer her own guide of 108 pearls—steps



you can take to awaken the healing potential of your body, mind, and spirit. Her new book, published by Hay House, is broken up into sections focusing on the body, mind, emotions and spirit. It covers topics such as how to effectively follow the elimination diet, how to turn stress into strength, the impact of stress and depression on the body, what you can do naturally for diabetes and high cholesterol, and

how our health and the choices we make can affect the planet. Her weekly website blogs reflect the wisdom from her book.

Before ending our time together, I took advantage of sitting across from this internationally-renowned cardiologist, scholar, author and leading proponent of Integrative Medicine. I asked her to share with our readers some of her "pearls of wisdom." These were the top two she shared with us.

- As an Integrative Cardiologist, she wanted to remind women that the number one cause of death to women is cardiovascular disease. "Each year we lose approximately 250,000 women to heart disease. So, women must be aware that just getting a pap smear and a mammogram isn't enough. About 40,000 women die from breast cancer every year. So, cardiovascular health needs to be taken seriously. I don't want women burying their head in the sand. Everything that goes into heart disease is entirely preventable and reversible. Women need to get rid of the cigarettes, start exercising, be aware of proper nutrition, and realize that stress relief is important."

- "Everyone should know their numbers – numbers such as their cholesterol, blood pressure, and BMI (body mass index). Since women usually are the head of the household and make most of the choices about food and healthcare, they can make a major positive change for their families. They can decide to make one night per week a meatless night, and the family will go along with it. Their family members might complain in the beginning, but eventually, they will acquiesce. Eventually, the entire family will realize there are other healthier options besides eating meat every day."

Learn more at www.PacificPearl-LaJolla.com and www.MimiGuarneriMD.com.

WHAT DOES MIRAGLO FOUNDATION DO TO HELP?

Miraglo Foundation has accomplished many amazing feats in the short time it has been in existence. It was founded by Rauni Prittinen King, RN and Mimi Guarneri, MD, FACC in 2011. Its vision is "Healing people and transforming lives through education, health and research." Their goal is to promote love, dignity and healing to those in need and the undeserved around the world. They also support innovative Integrative Medicine education and research.

A major project supported by Miraglo Foundation is the Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine, an innovative educational organization dedicated to engaging a global community of health professionals and health seekers in training, leadership, interprofessional collaboration, research, and advocacy. It is unifying the voice

of Integrative Health and Medicine. Another major project has been Sri Narayani Hospital and Research Center in the Tamil Nadu region in rural-Southern India. When Miraglo Foundation first became involved in helping the hospital, it was a one-room clinic, and, now, it is a 250-bed multi-specialty hospital serving thousands of patients monthly. It provides diagnostics, imaging services, surgical procedures, complimentary food and medicines and aftercare. In 2016, thanks to generous donations, they opened a 150-bed Specialty Hospital but are still in need of a cardiac catheterization laboratory and an open heart surgical suite, which is an \$800,000 project. Miraglo Foundation is currently raising funds for this project.

Miraglo Foundation also helped Shantipuri Friends Foundation in In-

dia by providing funding to schools for children who are shunned or orphaned. They provide education, school supplies, food, clothing, and medical care.

In addition to the work they do in India, the Foundation has helped organizations in other places in the world, as well as right here in San Diego. In Nepal, they work with an organization called Friends of Maiti Nepal to gather resources in the U.S. to assist its battle against human rights violations, such as human sex trafficking. Miraglo Foundation provides funds for rescued women and children to receive healthcare and education. In Uganda, they work with Mari Kelly Cows' Project by providing funding to purchase cows as a means of enhancing nutrition for this vulnerable population.

In San Diego, Miraglo Foundation works with the following organizations:

- *Feeding San Diego, Feeding America: feeding local children, families, seniors weekly*
- *Monarch School: a local school that is exclusively for students who are homeless.*
- *Welcome Home International: an organization providing holistic, peer-driven support services for women in transition from incarceration.*
- *Big Animals for Little Kids: an all-volunteer organization in San Diego that extends love through visits to hospitalized and ill children by entertainment volunteers in animal costumes.*
- *The San Diego Book Project: providing books and educational materials free-of-charge to teachers, schools and organizations with the assistance of Rotary Clubs.*

These are but a few of the wonderful causes that Miraglo has gotten behind. Check out their site www.miraglofoundation.org to find out more.

Join Miraglo Foundation to Help Make a Difference.

Visit www.miraglofoundation.org (and click the DONATE button)

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