

How at the age of 45 I found out what I wanted to do when I grow up

The Institute for Optimum Nutrition (ION), which publishes *Optimum Nutrition*, was founded in 1984 to teach nutrition and inspire future generations to learn about nutritional health. Graduate Mike Murphy (DiplON mBANT CNHC) told us about swapping a career in IT for health and wellbeing



What drew you to nutritional therapy?

"I first took an interest in nutritional healing when my father's health began to fail around 20 years ago. Then my career in IT was starting to take its toll as I de-prioritised my own health to climb the corporate ladder. In 2010, whilst on holiday with nothing to read, a friend of mine gave me *The Optimum Nutrition Bible* by Patrick Holford and I couldn't put the book down. I remember saying after I finished it that I had finally discovered what I want to be when I grow up... at the age of 45!"

What do you incorporate into your daily life from nutritional therapy?

"My daily supplement regime consists of a multiple vitamin-mineral, a gram of vitamin C, fish oil and some extra magnesium, as well as vitamin D during the winter months. But in terms of my dietary habits, I follow a low GL [glycaemic load] diet, eat lots of healthy fats and there is definitely more of a plant slant to my diet — I try to eat through as many colours of the rainbow as possible every day."

What did you enjoy studying at ION?

"My favourite modules were Nutritional Biochemistry and the Principles of Nutrition. I love learning about, and educating people on, how nutrients and food can affect our body systems."

How has your career path changed since graduating from ION?

"After graduating, my primary focus was setting up my own clinical practice, which I now try to keep to just one day a week, and I work part-time at another nutritional therapy clinic in Essex. ION has been a great launch pad for me as well. I started marking papers for the nutritional therapy

diploma course last year and I now also provide support during role play days for Year 2 students.

"I did my first lecture for ION this year and hope to do more of those in the future. I have written several articles for *Optimum Nutrition* magazine and I'm now preparing a weekly column in my local newspaper. Last year I got an opportunity from a fellow ION graduate to work at a health retreat in France. This has produced additional retreat opportunities for me this year in Spain. I've also started to do health talks at companies, schools and charities. Again, some of these opportunities came from my ION alumni.

"I find the role of health educator the most enjoyable and potentially the most lucrative part of what I do, and I plan on further developing the corporate wellness side of my business going forward."

What do you find rewarding working as a nutritional therapist?

"It's always a great feeling when a client tells you their symptoms have improved as a result of your recommendations. But I guess the best part for me is the diversity that biochemical individuality brings to the job. I enjoy unravelling the complexities of each case and I find the functional medicine framework to be very effective the more I rely on it."

Who were/are the main influencers in your career?

"Initially, it was Patrick Holford, but more recently I would say it is a handful of research pioneers such as: Dale Bredesen and his success with reversing Alzheimer's disease; Bruce Ames and his triage theory on micronutrient deficiencies and ageing; and Aristo Vojdani and his diagnostic

efforts around predictive auto-immune reactivity. I also get great inspiration from several virtual mentors like Sayer Ji who founded GreenMedInfo and of course Jeffrey Bland, the father of functional medicine. He has a way of simplifying the complex that is always so eloquent."

What is your favourite food/ingredient?

"I'm originally from San Diego, California so although most people eat an apple a day to keep the doctor away, with me it's an avocado — I get through at least seven a week. I've also recently discovered I am intolerant to eggs (I did eat an awful lot of them) and so I've become quite partial to chia seeds of late for breakfast. I put two tablespoons in a jar with 100 ml of coconut drink, secure the lid a shake it vigorously for 20 seconds or so. I leave this in the fridge overnight and have it for breakfast topped with some stewed berries or plums and a dash of cinnamon. It's very filling and gives me loads of energy to start the day."

What are your hopes for the future of nutritional therapy?

"According to Sir David Behan, chief executive of the Care Quality Commission, the NHS is 'breaking at the seams' from the continued rise in chronic degenerative disease. The demand is growing for preventative, personalised and participatory nutrition and lifestyle medicine. It's only a matter of time before the system has to change and when it does, I believe that nutritional therapists will be given a bigger seat at the healthcare table."

Contact Mike at:

www.saffronwellness.com
mike@saffronwellness.com