

# Choosing The Right Functional Wellness Practitioner

*A consumer's guide to choosing a functional wellness practitioner  
that fits your needs gets you results.*

By Dr. Patrick Zitt, DC, DNM, MS

**PERFECT HUMAN FUNCTION**

# Hello!

I am happy that your health search has brought you here! I am so confident in the effectiveness of the Functional Medicine model for addressing chronic health imbalances, but it is important that *you* feel confident in your choice of practitioner.

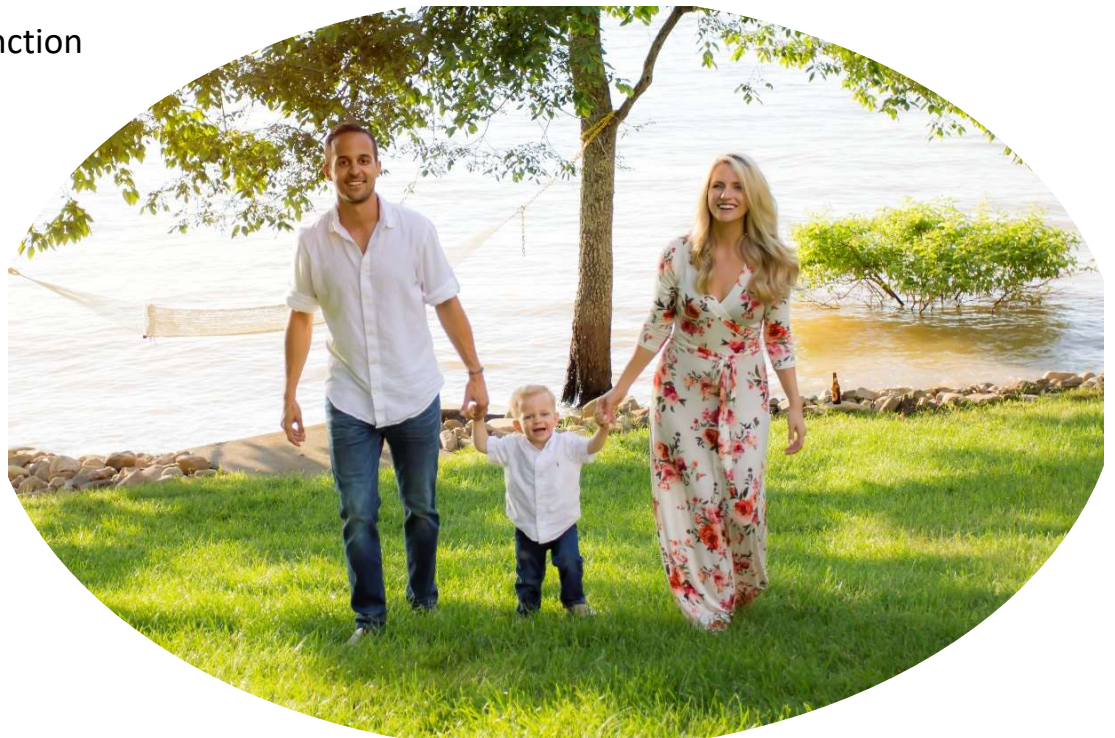
This is why I have made this guide for you. With this information you can make an informed and intelligent decision when finding a practitioner and feel secure that your health dollar is well spent.

If you have any questions about functional medicine, you are invited to call us at our office or schedule a free consultation. We'll be happy to help you in any way.

Yours in health,



Dr. Patrick Zitt  
Perfect Human Function



## IN THIS GUIDE YOU WILL DISCOVER...

- ✓ What makes functional medicine different.
- ✓ Which approach to functional medicine works best.
- ✓ 5 costly misconceptions when choosing a practitioner.
- ✓ The importance of value.
- ✓ Why you should trust your gut.
- ✓ The ultimate checklist to use when making your decision.
- ✓ The 4 steps to take right now.

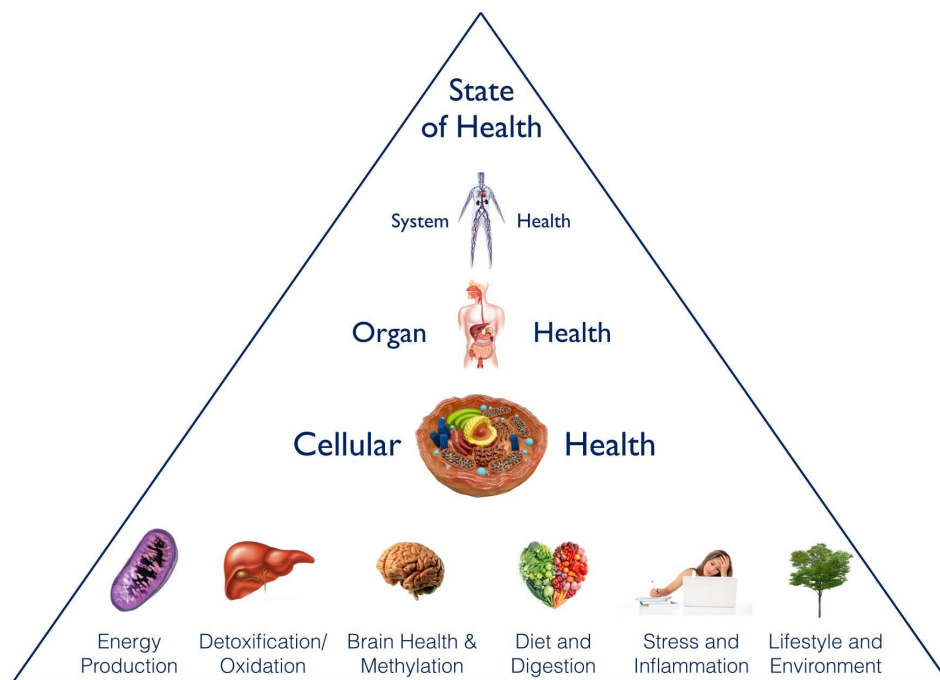
## THE FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE APPROACH

What makes functional medicine different from today's standard medical practice? The typical medical model addresses problems from the top down. That is, symptom reduction is the highest priority, followed by addressing the most surface issues. Functional medicine uses a bottom-up approach. It seeks to restore balance and wellbeing to the most basic elements of health which in turn resolve symptoms.

Your cells are the smallest unit of life in your body. Cells have incredibly complex functions to carry out. Cells in the body are constantly dying and replacing themselves. This provides an incredible opportunity to heal and repair. All diseases result from compromised cell function.

A collection of cells makes up an organ or a gland (liver, pancreas, brain, heart, etc.). Organs make up systems (nervous system, endocrine system, cardiovascular system, etc.). The state of your cellular health is what determines the health of your organs, the health of your organs determines the health of your systems, and the health of your systems determines your overall state of health.

Addressing cellular health starts a cascade of positive health reactions that ultimately influence the experience of symptoms. This is the most logical approach to true health and wellness.





## WHICH APPROACH TO FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE WORKS BEST?

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to functional medicine, some approaches are more logical than others. Choose a practice that provides study backed functional lab testing, personalized lifestyle recommendations, and only high-quality nutraceuticals. Most importantly, work with a practitioner that assesses and addresses your health from different vantage points. A functional medicine approach should include a thorough assessment of the following pillars:

**Mitochondria:** Mitochondria are found in virtually every cell in your body. These organelles are responsible for converting the food you eat into energy. When your cells have healthy mitochondria, they can carry out their cell function properly.

**Detoxification and Oxidation:** Unfortunately, we live in a world that is more toxic than our bodies were meant to handle. The liver is the largest internal organ and serves over 800 different functions in human physiology. It is highly critical to assess for an individual's detoxification capacity and oxidative stress for best outcomes.

**Brain Health, Neurotransmitters, and Methylation:** Inflammation, chronic stress, poor digestive function, sleepless nights, and poor nutrient status lead to brain-based imbalances. A good practitioner recognizes the importance and decision-making capability of a healthy brain and pays special attention to address it.

**Diet and Digestion:** Most people are quite aware that what you eat is very important, but many do not consider the state of their digestive function. Even a healthy meal, if undigested, creates a toxic burden on your system. A functional medicine approach will always include a thorough assessment of both diet and digestive function.

**Stress, Hormones, and Inflammation:** Today, our society is plagued with chronic stress, inflammation, and hormonal imbalances. This disrupts our bodies communication system and leads to many chronic health issues. It is critical for patients to learn appropriate stress management techniques, minimize inflammatory behaviors, and restore hormonal imbalances through lifestyle, instead pills and potions.

**Lifestyle and Environment:** Our health is a reflection of our lifestyle and our environment. It is often imbalances in these areas that lead to chronic health issues. A good functional medicine program will provide patients with the appropriate tools, coaching, and awareness to ensure that lifestyle and environment are working for the patient, not against them.

## 5 COSTLY MISCONCEPTIONS WHEN CHOOSING A FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE PRACTITIONER

### **MISCONCEPTION #1: You should wait until you have major symptoms before making an appointment.**

Ideally, no. Symptoms are usually one of the last things to present during the progression of chronic diseases. If you are experiencing symptoms, your body has likely already been fighting for some time to allow you to function symptom-free. Chronic disease places a huge burden on your body's systems (digestive, immune, cardiovascular, neurological, etc.). The longer you wait to address your condition, even if symptoms seem mild, the more damage may occur. This can lengthen the healing process and ultimately cost you more time and money.

While you and your practitioner want you to feel better as soon as possible, their ultimate concern is addressing the malfunctioning systems that are producing the symptoms in the first place. Patients who only seek symptomatic relief will experience a chronic recurrence of their chief complaint, incurring the ongoing costs associated with symptom management. While a functional medicine practitioner can help you find immediate symptomatic relief, they will also identify the key contributors to your current health challenge so you can work towards addressing the true issues.

### **MISCONCEPTION # 2: Honest functional medicine practices should give you an exact price quote over the telephone.**

While this sounds reasonable, it is not the case. Honest, reputable functional medicine practitioners develop *unique* treatment plans for each of their patients. This is one of the underlying principles of functional medicine. A functional medicine practice should only be able to provide you with a fairly accurate estimate after thoroughly evaluating your case. While they would love to give a quote over the phone, there is no way for anyone to know what testing, supplements, modalities, and strategy are best suited for your specific needs without assessing your complete medical history.

That being said, look for as much financial transparency as possible in the form of free introductory consultations or “ballpark” ranges that attempt to encompass all fees.

### **MISCONCEPTION #3: I don't need all that testing.**

Maybe not all, but definitely some. While discussing symptoms is important, symptoms can only point to the “what”, not the “why”. Every patient’s system is unique. Two people can have the exact same presentation of symptoms but drastically different underlying causes. A skilled practitioner should make recommendations only after carefully analyzing specific laboratory testing. This objective data reveals the underlying imbalances that are contributing to the patient’s health challenges. Testing is the only way to identify clinical blind spots and pinpoint the origin of the symptoms.

It is important to take note of the quality of lab testing being performed. There are numerous tests on the market but sadly, many are inaccurate. Do not be led astray by cheap, over the counter tests that may lead you to believe that nothing is wrong, or everything is wrong!

Additionally, beware a practice that recommends the same testing to every patient, regardless of symptoms or goals. As with treatment, the investigation process should be customized.

### **MISCONCEPTION #4: You will see the same results with any functional medicine practitioner.**

Not necessarily. Functional medicine requires many years of training and continuous, ongoing education to stay abreast of the immense amount of information that is available to practitioners. When searching for a good functional medicine practitioner, it is important to ask what certifications the practitioner has, what associations and educational platforms the practitioner utilizes, and it is also important to discuss how comfortable the practitioner is in laboratory interpretation. You may find that the same lab result is interpreted more comprehensively by an experienced practitioner.

Additionally, how your practitioner approaches addressing the underlying causes of disease will greatly impact your outcomes. Strive to find a practice that approaches the healing process with a varied and balanced approach that includes diet, exercise, supplementation, mindset, environment, and emotional wellbeing.

## **MISCONCEPTION #5: The practice that offers the lowest price or the one covered by your insurance is the one that you should hire.**

Definitely not. There are many problems with choosing a practitioner based solely on low cost:

- The advertised, up-front price may not be the total price you pay due to additional costs.
- A low price may only include a limited spectrum of services that may not be enough to help you fully reach your health goals.
- Low price usually indicates a low level of value the practitioner places on their time, training, and quality of services.
- Insurance carriers dictate the level of care you receive, and they are not interested in covering any more than bare minimum. This often leads to a lack of usable information. Additionally, depending on your coverage, benefits, and services needed, utilizing insurance may cost more.

In depth health histories, careful analysis of test results, thoughtful plan creation, and diligent follow up are what produce the remarkable health outcomes most people enjoy with functional medicine. Due to the time demand on the practitioner, by nature, functional medicine is not cheap. The old saying applies, “You get what you pay for”. If tests are cheap, they are probably not specific, or research based. If services are cheap, you are probably not getting your doctor’s full attention or care.

This is not the time to bargain shop! Working with the right functional medicine practice will save you both time and money in the long run.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUE**

Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.

A good functional medicine program will provide value well beyond the program itself, yielding a lifetime of benefit. Addressing the root cause may cost more initially but continues to deliver value and savings over your lifetime.

Your health is your greatest asset and investment. It should be valued more than your home, more than your car, more than your clothes....things the average person spends a great deal of money to maintain and protect.



## TRUST, COMMUNICATION, AND YOUR INSTINCT

While considering things like value, quality of testing, and a balanced approach to healing are of high importance, there are a few intangibles you must consider.

The relationship between the patient and the functional medicine doctor is typically closer than the average doctor patient relationship. There is more discussion about in-depth health experiences, emotional and mental traumas, fears, and goals. It is important that the patient is honest about these things. You can only be honest if there is trust and comfort with who you are working with. Often, you know if there is the potential for trust during the initial consultation. Any red flags, gut instincts, or warning bells should be heeded, even if you can't name your hesitation.

It is also important to note whether your communication style is in sync with your practitioner's. Assess during your initial consultation if you are receiving explanations that are understood and delivered in a way you appreciate.





## MY PRACTITIONER CHECKLIST

When deciding on the doctor to work with, consider these important elements:

- ✓ Does the practice offer a no obligation consultation?
- ✓ Will the practitioner consider all the pillars of my health?
- ✓ Has functional laboratory testing been recommended that is specific to my needs?
- ✓ Am I comfortable with the practitioner's advanced education?
- ✓ Does the pricing seem fair (not *cheap*)? Do I feel like I will receive more value than price?
- ✓ Do I feel comfortable with the amount of personalized care I will be receiving?
- ✓ Do I feel comfortable with the practitioner's communication style?
- ✓ Did the practice pass my "gut check"?

## THE 4 STEPS TO BETTER HEALTH, ENERGY, AND THE VITALITY

If you're thinking about seeking the help of a functional medicine practitioner, we encourage you to follow these four steps:

**Step #1:** Make a commitment to yourself to prioritize your health. The longer you struggle with your health, the more difficult and expensive your recovery will be. Plus, the longer you wait, the more you and those around you will suffer.

**Step #2:** List your objectives. Do you just want to feel better? Or do you want to really get to the root causes of your health issue and address them at the source? Do you want to work with an honest, reputable practice - or are you willing to risk working with the company that offers the lowest price?

**Step #3:** Ask questions. The way you learn more about any company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are six good questions to ask a functional medicine practitioner before you begin your journey together.

- What is your definition of health?
- What type of laboratory testing do you perform?
- How will you know if my health is improving?
- What accreditations do you have?
- How many hours of continuing education per year do you take?
- What access will I have to you during our time together?

**Step #4:** Once you are satisfied that you are working with the professional best suited to your needs, call their office to schedule a no obligation consultation. This appointment may be free, though not always.

By following these four steps, you will be on your way to discovering the root causes of your health concerns.

## ABOUT PATRICK ZITT

Dr. Patrick Zitt is a Doctor of Chiropractic, a Certified Doctor of Natural Medicine and has completed all coursework through the Institute for Functional Medicine. Since completing his formal education in 2010, Dr. Zitt has accumulated approximately 600 additional educational hours with over 400 hours in clinical nutrition and functional medicine.

He has been in clinical practice for more than 10 years. In 2017, he established Perfect Human Function, a virtual functional medicine clinic based in Knoxville, Tennessee. In this practice, he utilizes in-depth investigative techniques and comprehensive objective testing to help patients discover the root causes of their stubborn chronic conditions.

He lives in Knoxville with his wife, Melissa (who also serves as patient concierge), and his two young boys, Elijah and Samuel.

## PERFECT HUMAN FUNCTION

Perfect Human Function's mission is to partner with patients and communities to positively impact their health and happiness. PHF is committed to educating millions of people about how to reverse and prevent chronic diseases as well as live a happy and productive life. We do this by mentoring patients on lifestyle, and by always addressing the root cause. We commit to providing the highest level of service, integrity, and honesty to those that trust us with their health.

For highly motivated and committed patients, Perfect Human Function is ready to serve. Feel free to give us a call or learn more about our approach at [www.perfecthumanfunction.com](http://www.perfecthumanfunction.com)