

“It is essential that the client feels genuinely listened to, particularly if they have seen a series of different medical (or complementary) professionals with little improvement”

SMART
INFUZED
FÜD

NAME: Jo Saunders, DipCNM, mBANT, CHNC.

WEBSITE: www.smartinfusedfud.co.uk, www.cookingthemhealthy.com, www.naturedoc.co.uk/about/practitioners/jo-saunders.

Where did you study and how long did it take you to qualify?

I studied nutritional therapy for three years at the College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM) and qualified in 2011.

What's your main therapy/modality and why?

My main modality is nutritional therapy. This is because I genuinely feel we are what we eat (or digest!) and the food we eat can make a significant positive impact on our wellbeing, both physically and mentally. I also adore food and cooking, and strongly believe there is a huge amount that can be done through our own “Kitchen Pharmacy”.

How long have you been in practice?

I set up my own practice in April 2012, six months after giving birth to my first child, my son Max. It was something of a juggle building my client base alongside unravelling the intricacies of motherhood, but the passion was real and spurred me on. I would almost certainly do things



differently now, but I don't think wild horses would have stopped me at the time! I was desperate to start practising and start sharing my recently-acquired knowledge in helping people.

Where do you practise?

I see clients on a part-time basis from my home-based practice (which gives me flexibility to juggle work around being a mother). After practising on my own for some years I joined the NatureDoc team as their first team practitioner in September 2017, a massive compliment to me and a very exciting step in my journey as a Nutritional Therapist.

Why did you decide to become a practitioner?

I have always been interested in the workings of the human body, as well as holding a strong connection with my own body. I have struggled with my own health issues in the past – I have Hashimoto's thyroiditis, which I manage well through positive nutrition. My knowledge is hugely empowering for both myself and my family.

It was also invaluable having that nutrition and health knowledge when I became a mother, and encouraged me to have the confidence to trust my instinct. This is something I try to do with others.

What conditions or types of client do you see most of?

I focus on seeing women and children, and frequently support families as a whole. I often find that a parent will bring their child to see me initially (as we always tend to prioritise our children before ourselves), and then I will in turn see the rest of the family. This is lovely, as I build up a great relationship with the family as a whole and can support them all long-term through various life stages and through any acute issues that arise. This also works well as it's much more straightforward implementing changes as a family rather than making various tweaks for everyone individually.

I see a vast range of conditions - many digestive issues, skin problems, hormone and thyroid issues in women. Stress/“life load” is a commonly present factor, too, whether as a trigger for symptoms or a reason for the client booking an appointment.

I have definitely seen an increase in the number of cases presenting with autoimmunity in recent years, which is interesting. The stress-autoimmunity connection cannot be ignored.

How would you describe your general approach?

While I am scientific and evidence-based in my clinical approach, I do like to keep an open mind and have used other modes of complementary therapies with my family (and pets!). Homeopathy in particular has been hugely effective.

I believe health is multi- →

→ faceted, and while I am passionate about optimising nutrition to form a strong and essential foundation to health, I appreciate it is not “everything”. I also greatly advocate finding joy in life, exploring and enjoying our passions – whatever those may be, moving our bodies in the way it feels right for you (I enjoy running, and yoga has been transformational for me), using our minds, spending time with those we love and who make us feel loved – and laughter.

Plus, the addition of the odd glass of quality red wine and of course some dark chocolate...for the polyphenols, of course!

Why do you do what you do?

I strongly believe that preventative/lifestyle medicine simply has to be the future, encouraging people to trust their instinct and take responsibility for their own health. We cannot sustain a future of symptom-led medicine, prescribing medication to ease symptoms. We need to build a foundation of better health, enabling stronger easier futures, and education is key.

For a number of reasons, the role of the GP has changed from the traditional family doctor in the past. They are under so much pressure from time, funding and huge patient lists. While I would always encourage a client, family member or friend to seek advice from their GP, I would also urge them to gain a closer understanding of their own health and focus on preventing dis-ease, rather than treating it as it arises.

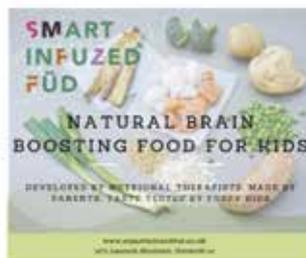
Do you enhance your business with any projects outside of



your clinic?

Seeing clients one-to-one over the years has enabled me to identify the limits – in my role as a practitioner in a consultation – in what I am able to provide clients. I found a number of clients were apprehensive about making changes and lacked both confidence and inspiration in the kitchen. As a result I also run Cooking them Healthy workshops with my colleague Georgie, a friend and talented and experienced chef.

Our workshops have proved to be a sell-out success, and are themed as Digestive Support, Immune Boosting and Female Health. During the workshop we demonstrate – and taste – delicious family recipes containing key nutrients to help support each health need. The workshops work brilliantly as they are informal, it is fun to be part of a group and the day takes on an organic style led by the



questions and areas of focus in the group. They also work well for those who are not in a position to commit to a series of one-to-one consultations, or are new to the idea of improving their health and would like to learn more without being overwhelmed.

People love seeing the more unusual nutritional gems such as kefir and kombucha being made, as they can initially seem daunting, and we always manage to have a giggle while doing it.

I enjoy giving talks and sharing my enthusiasm and knowledge to anyone who will listen (!), with a particular passion and focus on children’s health. I think it is so empowering for parents to have a toolkit at home they can rely on rather than depending on the GP for every ailment.

I regularly attend CPD events and have a special interest in all female health conditions and childhood health. It is key to staying on top of ever-evolving research and new products coming onto the market.

While I believe cooking from scratch is the foundation to



healthier family eating, and something that I am passionate about myself, I have learnt through clients, friends and pressures on my own time combining work and a young family, how challenging it can be. I also acknowledge that some people simply don’t share my passion or inclination for cooking. Therefore I am very excited about being involved in the launch of the UK’s first frozen food range, Smart Infused Füd, with a strong nutritional focus on mental health and wellbeing.

Smart Infused Fud [we featured the launch in last month's mag] is the brainchild of Hattie Maleuverer, founder of well-established London-based catering company Top Hat. During quieter work moments, Hattie would ask her kitchen chefs to make up our Cooking them Healthy recipes for her children to keep in the freezer to ensure they ate well when she was working full-time and wasn't able to cook for them herself. Hattie believed that many families would benefit from this and some years later, Smart Infused Fud was born.

I am incredibly proud and excited to be involved as there is quite simply nothing like this on the market. We are effectively redefining ready meals, and their reputation as being nutritionally poor, as well as easing guilt for

busy parents. We have focused on a small yet delicious direct to consumer range, all gluten and nut free and a vegan option, free from added sugar and any preservatives and artificial colourings or flavourings. For our launch, we have focused on a Brain Boosting range, focusing on the nutritional content of each dish so they are rich in B vitamins, Omega 3, iron and zinc for supporting healthy cognitive function in children. We called it "Smart Infused Fud" because our food goes beyond 5-a-day thinking. It has been especially developed to contain vitamins and nutrients that help with improve mental performance, cognitive function, concentration, anxiety and nerves as well as tiredness and fatigue amongst primary school age children.

Our insight was really just from watching the kids around us. Children's Mental Health Week Research this year showed that 56% of all primary school children say they always are worried about something. Anxiety, depression and other mental health disorders are massively on the rise among our children. Smart Infused Fud is the first food brand that was set up specifically for primary school age children by parents who see a world of social media, SATs for 7-year olds and increasing homework pressure.

What is your favourite type of client?

Without question I find the easiest client is someone who wants to be helped. An interest in their own body is key, and an understanding from the outset that as much as I

can guide, inform and support, I can't do everything for them!

What is the most challenging type of symptoms/illness/problem that you get presented with?

Unfortunately I see a lot of complex cases, typically those people who feel they have reached the end of the road, or where routine medical testing has come up blank yet symptoms remain, or they have tried numerous practitioners with no joy. These clients are often exhausted, overwhelmed and despondent. In cases such as this I often find it is the simple changes that can have the biggest impact, for example stripping the complex medical history right back and focusing on improving someone's sleep, for example, to allow them to heal.

Case history A very personal story

My life was tipped upside down from a personal perspective last November when my youngest daughter was diagnosed with Acute Lymphocytic Leukaemia aged just 20 months – an incredible shock for anyone and particularly in such a robust healthy little girl. Lucinda has helped guide and support me through optimising Mary's nutrition during her complex treatment regime.

- Age: 20 months at diagnosis .
- Diagnosis: Acute Lymphocytic Leukaemia.
- Treatment: two years six months of chemotherapy.
- Side-effects of chemotherapy treatment: neutropenia, intestinal permeability, loss of appetite, weight loss, GI symptoms and inflammation, diarrhoea, mucositis.

One of our toughest battles has been the neutropenia (low neutrophil count), a cruel side-effect of the chemotherapy treatment, especially as Mary had such a robust immune system before treatment. She was delivered at home (unplanned!), delayed cord clamping, breastfed for ten months and weaned on an organic wholefood diet with plenty of vegetables and fermented foods, combined with a healthy appetite.

One of the clues of the Leukaemia jigsaw diagnosis was her suffering from both Streptococcus throat infection and a severe case of Hand, Foot & Mouth infection a month before her diagnosis; she struggled to shift both – very unusual for her.

- Neutropenic Sepsis – December 2018
- RSV, Bronchiolitis & Pneumonia – January 2019
- *Giardia* and *C. difficile* infections as a result

of multiple antibiotics – February 2019

- Raised CRP – likely due to gastrointestinal inflammation
 - Transient lactose intolerance following GI infections
 - Leaky gut/Intestinal permeability due to multiple antibiotic treatments and
 - Weight loss/lack of appetite – ongoing, side-effect of chemotherapy.
 - Nausea and vomiting – ongoing. Side-effect of chemotherapy.
- Several courses of Tazacin (December, January & February).
- Metranidazole – one-week course
 - Co-Trimoxazole (two days per week, ongoing).

Nutritional interventions

Fresh vegetable juices administered through NG tube (nasogastric tube) – when not neutropenic.

All supplements have been checked with the oncology consultants and pharmacists for possible contraindications. Supplements were blended into her feeds and administered through NG feeding tube.

Mary was prescribed Peadiasure by the NHS dietician, but given that it was her sole source of nutrition for some time I searched for an alternative via nutrition colleagues. I found Functional Formularies Nourish from the US which is the only whole food NG blend available. The NHS dietician was open to discussion about this.

- * Slippery elm and turmeric blended with raw organic olive oil (polyphenols, active curcumin compounds)

* Digestive enzymes given to support transient lactose intolerance following gut infections and antibiotics.

The combination of slippery elm, digestive enzymes, colostrum and turmeric have significantly reduced her digestive symptoms and discomfort, and her stools have returned to normal.

- Her ongoing supplement protocol:
- Turmeric blended with raw organic olive oil
 - Fushi Astragalus tincture
 - Allergy Research Mycocylin drops
 - Nature's Aid Multivitamin Drops
 - Metabolics MultiMineral drops
 - Nature's Aid Vitamin D3 drops
 - Bare Biology Superhero Omega 3 oil
 - Allergy Research Colostrum
 - Biokult Probiotics (when not neutropenic)

Additional therapies include using aromatherapy essential oils through diffuser – eucalyptus essential oil to help relieve bronchiolitis and pneumonia symptoms, lavender to help reduce anxiety and encourage sleep, frankincense to relieve stress, pain, inflammation and support the immune system.

Better You Magnesium Sleep Body Lotion massaged after an evening bath to help calm the nervous system and encourage sleep.

We have a long journey and gruelling treatment regime ahead, but it gives me ultimate satisfaction, and comfort, to be able to support Mary and to be able to help her in the way I know best.

- Jo is currently taking a break from private practice to support Mary during her treatment but hopes to return to it in a few months' time.

→ What one thing is essential to you in your practice?

It is essential to me that the client feels genuinely listened to, particularly if they have seen a series of different medical (or complementary) professionals with little improvement in their symptoms. Sometimes simply the talking/listening proves therapeutic.

If money, time and effort were no object, what one thing would you change about your practice or integrative medicine in general?

Wow, a seemingly limitless answer list to this question! I would love to have studied medicine if time and life allowed. I think the best doctors of the future will incorporate a more holistic approach to treating patients with very powerful results. To have that level of medical knowledge, combined with how to help patients best through nutrition and lifestyle medicine would be incredibly valuable.

I would also like to roll out nutrition education to all children of school age so rather than being nagged out to eat their vegetables, they really understand the impact nutrition can have on their bodies and minds, and the power they have in managing their own health. My son at the age of seven is now starting to make the connection between importance of quality and quantity of food/fuel and his beloved sport. There is so much potential for interactive nutrition workshops within schools and this is hopefully something I will get involved in at some point.

I would love to learn more about Ayurvedic medicine to incorporate into my personal and professional life alongside my passion for yoga. I also dream of studying acupuncture and homeopathy for both my clients and my family, but we shall see if I can make this a reality!

What piece of advice would you give to newly qualified practitioners who are just setting up a business?

It can feel daunting transferring all your newly-acquired knowledge into a clinical practice setting. Try to remember that even when it feels like a second language to you, it is usually all new information to a client. Less is almost definitely more.

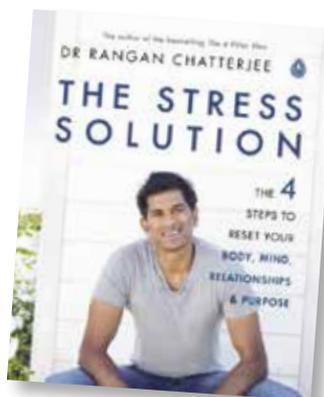
I used to spend so much time writing extensive treatment plans that it simply wasn't sustainable. I was very eager to share ALL of my knowledge, but it is key to remember that this is just the start of the journey for many clients, and changes need to be manageable and sustainable.

Try to focus on a maximum of three recommendations, at the most. This is also more likely to encourage clients to return, rather than overwhelming them at the outset and potentially setting them up for failure. Also, really try to work towards completing your treatment plans within the consultation; this does take practice and confidence, but will make a huge difference to your practice, and time!

Having young children, including a child with a serious health condition, has raised my awareness even further of the importance of self-care. It is something that I continue to work to make a priority, as I do find passion can interfere with prioritisation. The adage "you can't pour from an empty cup" has never rang more true. We quite simply need to look after ourselves if we can be expected to look after anyone else, be it family or clients.

Who or what has been the main influence/inspiration on your practice?

There are so many people who inspire me in the nutrition and wellbeing world. I have known Christine Bailey for some years now – she is hugely experienced and knowledgeable, a mother



of children with complex health issues. I thoroughly enjoy listening to her speak and imparting her knowledge. I love Amelia Freer's recipes and styling, everything she does is so beautifully put together and well thought out. I would say my two greatest inspirations are Dr Rangan Chatterjee and Lucinda Miller, founder of NatureDoc.

Dr Chatterjee is an NHS GP who practices Functional Medicine. I think he has made health accessible to all through his brilliantly simple yet effective 4 Pillar Plan. I also devoured his most recent book *The Stress Solution*; without question the most common and powerful theme running through the case histories of my clients is stress and the impact this has on their health. He has a warm engaging manner and his podcasts make for brilliant listening, particularly in the car.

Lucinda Miller is the founder of NatureDoc, and THE expert in family health, with over 20 years of experience. Her knowledge, empathy and passion for her work is immeasurable. She has a thriving clinic and team of practitioners as well as a brilliant



Naturopath and herbalist Lucinda Miller:
www.naturedoc.co.uk.

online shop, a one-stop shop for a family's nutritional needs. She continues to be a huge support to me both personally and professionally. I believe her brilliant book *The Good Stuff* should be a staple, well-thumbed reference for every family. Not only are the recipes straightforward and delicious, but are also easily adapted for those with food allergies, specific health needs etc.

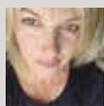
After working in practice on my own for several years it felt brilliant to become part of the NatureDoc team and able to share ideas and advice regarding cases. Lucinda continues to be my mentor and friend.

Which CAM book has helped or inspired you most, so far in your career?

As mentioned above, those that have inspired me such as Christine, Lucinda and Dr Chatterjee have all written brilliant books. With reference to the stress and autoimmunity connection, the book *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* by Robert Sapolsky is a brilliant insight into the impact of stress on the physical body – an ideal recommendation for a client keen to learn more. *Healing with Whole Foods* by Paul Pitchford is a wonderful reference source and really brings us back to the foundations of nutritional therapy. It has a basis in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda, two ancient medicine systems I find fascinating and which I find blend so beautifully with much of the modern evidence based nutritional science of today.

What would you like to see covered in IHCAN magazine that we're not getting to?

I would always welcome seeing more regarding children's health featured in IHCAN magazine and at CPD conferences. After all, our children are the future and the more we can do now to support their health the better.



We know our practitioners are quietly getting on with changing people's lives, every day – and we want to celebrate and share the inspiration. In Practice is coordinated by regular contributor Rebecca Smith, who runs a successful practice of her own, established 20 years ago. Contact her direct to be part of the feature: rebecca@newportcomplementaryhealthclinic.co.uk, and follow her on Twitter: @NCHHealthClinic.