

Battling the Medical Establishment—Margaret O.'s Story

When I started gaining weight in my 30s I wanted to find out why. I wasn't eating any more than I had been before the weight gain, and my level of physical activity was the same. Instinctively I knew some other variable was at work here. At first I went to the doctors at Kaiser Hospital, where I have my medical plan. I thought they could help me.

They did a series of tests on me and declared that I had an under-active thyroid. That made sense to me and I was hopeful that with thyroid medication my metabolism could be ratcheted up and my weight would start to go down. They prescribed the thyroid hormone Synthroid. I took it, but nothing happened.

So I went back to Kaiser and told them I was still gaining weight. They gave me the same tests over again, and they gave me another prescription for Synthroid. It seems this was the only thing they knew. When I went back a third time and told them I wasn't getting any results, they just looked at me strangely and told me to eat less.

From this experience I learned to harbor a healthy skepticism about the medical profession. Today I seek my own conclusions and I don't take things at face value any more. Being an educated person, I began reading everything I could about how the body metabolizes food.

Meanwhile, I tried every diet that came down the pike. I tried Optifast, Shaklee, and many other diets. I would lose weight on each of these, but I never lost fat—always muscle. I would look at myself in the mirror after each of these diets and see flesh just hanging on me. The diets were hard to stay on, and they made me weak.

I remember one time about six years ago: I was on a vacation in Hawaii after completing a diet that consisted of eating nothing but protein drinks four times a day. There I was, hiking along this trail, and when our group came to a small fissure on the trail everyone leaped across it. But I couldn't get my body to do it. I was that weak.

Every time I came off one of those diets, I gained back more than I had weighed before. This went on for my entire adulthood. I got up to 240 pounds, and I am only 5'1" tall. It became hard to move around and hard to go shopping. Clothes were a problem, so I either sewed or bought them from the Nordstrom catalog. I was a size 22. One doesn't find beautiful clothing in those sizes. The simple act of getting up from a chair or a sofa was hard for me. So was going to a restaurant and sitting in a booth. I never knew whether I could fit into the booth.

I went on like this for 37 years, seeking answers, talking to people, trying diets, and joining support groups. Many times I got tired of searching and just let myself go. But even when I'd given up and gotten sloppy again, there was always part of my mind sort of passively available, listening, waiting

to find out about something that might make permanent weight loss possible.

My first break came during menopause, when I read Dr. John R. Lee's *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You about Menopause*. This book had a lot of inside-track information about hormone replacement therapy. It gave me information about hormones that I had been seeking all my life. Dr. Lee was the first doctor to come out saying that Premarin and all the synthetic estrogen hormones being given to women at menopause were actually hurting them. He talked about how estrogen made the body store fat. I thought: At last! A clue! I began to believe that I had a hormone problem, one that went beyond my under-active thyroid.

But I needed more specific information, and I needed a doctor who could help me balance my hormones. I went to the endocrinologists at Kaiser, but that was a lost cause. They wanted to get me on Premarin as fast as they could! They are part of that medical establishment Dr. Lee writes about that is brainwashed about Premarin. They certainly were not about to help me.

I knew I needed to find an endocrinologist outside the Kaiser system who agreed with Dr. Lee's ideas and was ready to buck the whole system regarding Premarin. But where do you find someone like that? My entire life's experience had taught me that doctors were, for the most part, like Stepford wives; they were cheerleaders for a system that reduced reality to a few simple clichés. I was also leery of exposing myself to more insults from doctors. Whenever I would go in for these consultations about my weight, I could see exactly what these doctors were thinking. Whether they said it or not, they gave me the feeling that they thought I was some kind of binge eater looking for a shortcut or a miracle.

I started feeling trapped; I had the same discouraged, sort of Kafkaesque sensation like I'd gotten back in my 30s.

But then, over New Year's, my husband and I were at our condo in the desert and I saw Dr. Platt on television. Everything he said made so much sense that I made an appointment to see him!

I brought my Kaiser folder to Dr. Platt, and he did a battery of hormone tests. I found him easy to talk to. He also had me consult with one of his nutritionists. At first I was cynical about talking to another nutritionist. I have been through a lot of nutrition classes sponsored by Kaiser. That's another insulting thing they do when you are looking for help with weight loss: they make you take these classes. I've been through umpteen nutrition classes and cholesterol classes and so forth. You name it and Kaiser wants to put you through it.

Dr. Platt's team is welcoming. They really have knowledge that helps you and a way of sharing it that I understood.

Dr. Platt told me that when I lost weight my cholesterol would go down. My cholesterol was 293 when I went in there. Kaiser had wanted me to take Zocor for my high cholesterol, which is one of about three or four statin drugs on the market. But I said no. Dr. Platt and I are working on my cholesterol with niacin and thyroid. Within the first two months of starting with Dr. Platt, my cholesterol dropped 50 points.

When the hormone tests came back, Dr. Platt and I sat down and went over them. My low thyroid was still there, and Dr. Platt adjusted my thyroid, giving me T3 in addition to T4. He explained to me

why the Synthroid by itself wasn't helping me. It made me angry to think I had been faithfully taking this stuff for 20 years and it had been doing nothing for me.

As I lost weight I gained energy. It became easier to do just about anything. So far I've lost 38 pounds. I weigh 202 now. But I'm wearing a size 16 and there's no flab! I used to feel impaired, but I'm not impaired anymore. I have no problems getting up off of the sofa or in and out of a restaurant booth.

I've always been an active person even when it was a struggle to move around. I still work in a gift shop every day, sing in a choir, volunteer at my Temple, teach piano privately at home, and cook with my husband every night. My ideal weight is 141. I am confident I will get there.