

## Local doctor helps patients reverse symptoms of Alzheimer's

ENCINITAS — “A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia can leave families feeling helpless,” Dr. Heather Sandison said. “Historically, the prognosis has not been terrible and most people don't improve. It is life altering for both patients and their caregivers.” However, Dr. Sandison and the team at North County Natural Medicine are utilizing a groundbreaking program to help patients and their loved ones fight back against cognitive decline.

It all begins with the cutting-edge work of Dr. Dale Bredesen, author of “The End of Alzheimer's.” The book is the first to discuss both prevention of and reversal of cognitive decline. Dr. Sandison studied under Dr. Bredesen, and has dedicated a portion of her practice to helping families get back what Alzheimer's and like diseases have taken from them.

“Patients in their 50s and 60s are losing decades of their lives that they won't enjoy,” Sandison said. “If they can get that back, the whole world can change. If

Baby Boomers can engage with their families and contribute to their communities for decades longer, everything is different.”

The basis for the work Sandison and her team do at North County Natural Medicine is simple. “We help people become their healthiest so they can show up for their lives and hopefully, help all of us solve the world's problems,” Sandison said.

This involves neurocognitive optimization, studying how all components of one's life effects their brain. “Nutrients, toxins, blood flow, genetics, posture, stress levels — all of these play a part in your cognitive function,” she said. Dr. Sandison's work with patients experiencing cognitive decline involves taking all of this information and more, and figuring out not just the “what” of a patient's condition, but also the “why.” Once she has identified that part of the puzzle, a treatment plan can be implemented.

“There are several ways that a patient can go



**DR. HEATHER SANDISON** and the team at North County Natural Medicine. *Courtesy photo*

down the path of dementia, our job is to figure out which path they took,” she said. “We take a comprehensive history from the patient and do extensive lab work to determine which factor or combination of factors led them to their cognitive decline.”

Sandison points to six types of Alzheimer's disease: glycotoxic (high sugar), high inflammation, low hormones, toxic, vascular/

circulatory and traumatic. “For example, if you've worked as a welder, we will look at your toxicity levels,” she said. “A female who had a full hysterectomy in her 30s, we would consider her at high risk for low hormones. Someone who eats fast food and sweets multiple times a day would be a candidate for the glycotoxic type.”

Utilizing Dr. Bredesen's philosophy, Dr. Sandison

said it's about taking a step back. “Let's see if we can find out the ‘why,’” she said. “What led to the imbalance causing the neurons not to fire effectively? We help the body create balance so that the things in the way can be removed. At its core, Alzheimer's is the brain's way of protecting itself. If we can remove what it's protecting itself from, we can begin to reverse the symptoms.”

Once the team can pinpoint the “why” for the patient's cognitive decline, individualized treatment can begin. And the results have been staggering, even still for Sandison who has been doing this work for years.

“The first patient we saw a drastic change in, I was just started crying right there in front of them,” she said. “My patient came in with her husband with the classic signs of Alzheimer's. Her handwriting was at a steep slant, she would start to answer my questions and forget what I asked before she could answer.”

The patient had initially scored a two out of 30 on

one of the tests Sandison had given her, on which 26 is considered in the normal range. After just a month, she scored a 16 out of 30. “Her handwriting was back to normal,” she said. “She was bickering with her husband about something that had happened the night before. I wasn't sure if I should laugh or cry, I just couldn't believe it. My patient could engage in life in a way she hadn't been able to a month previously.”

With so much of the world in a state of uncertainty, Dr. Sandison is passionate about connecting people with their lives, families and communities. This is precisely why she chose to do this type of work. “If we can get people realizing their full creative potential and help them get the most out of their day and last few decades, they can be a part of the solution,” she said.

North County Natural Medicine is located at 815 N. Vulcan Ave. in Encinitas. To learn more or to schedule a consultation, visit [northcountynaturalmedicine.com](http://northcountynaturalmedicine.com) or call (760) 385-8683.