

## Relieve Your Back Pain in 4 Steps – Dr. Marcella Madera – #933

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Unless, you're a brand-new listener to the show, you know that I always tell you what you're going to get out of the show. So, you can do this weird thing that we don't do often, and you could decide whether it's worth your time and energy to consume a piece of content.

I am asking you for about an hour of your life right now, and you might be doing something else. That's also valuable, I encourage you to stack things like that. But honestly, if this is of no interest to you, then seriously, there's almost a thousand other episodes, and I'm queuing them all up. So, you know what you're going to get.

On this show, you're going to meet Johns Hopkins trained spinal surgeon who is moving away from cutting on spines, because she's found stuff that works way better. You're going to learn about how to tie together things to take care of your spine. And you might say, "I don't care about my spine. My back doesn't hurt."

The odds are, that over the course of your life, there will be meaningful amounts of time where your back does hurt, whether it's because you fall off your mountain bike, because you overdid that rainbow pose in yoga, or because you ate something that causes inflammation. And it turns out that your vertebrae are probably some of the weakest links that fill inflammation first.

And we have a world class expert on to talk about that. And some really cool new things like something called the Aqua Method, which is a brand-new treatment that includes photobiomodulated, PRP, with functional movement and functional tissue mobilization.

And our innovator and guest today has been on the show before. She has seen the inside of my spinal cord and who knows what else I was unconscious for a lot of that. None other than Dr. Marcella Madera, who is a full-on conventional doctor neurosurgeon, who has switched to functional medicine to get better results. Marcella, my friend, thank you for being on the show again, today.

Dr. Marcella Madera:

Thank you for having me. It's such a pleasure and honor to be here.

Dave:

Do your surgeon colleagues in there really expensive German sports cars? Do they look down on you for having gone functional? Are you a pariah?

Marcella:

I was really, really fortunate to be able to start my integrative, functional, holistic practice, alongside my conventional practice for a period of time as I was figuring out what it was. And my partners at that time were cocking their heads like, "Huh, I wonder what that is?" And over time, I have been really blessed to have received referrals from them now that I'm fully in my integrative holistic space and doing biologic and cell medicine.

And what we're finding is that, patients really want the truth about back pain. They really want to know the root cause. And when they go in asking a lot of questions that my colleagues are not answering, or they think, "Well, maybe, Marcella has an answer, why don't you go check that out?" And I am, myself, surprised and honored when it continues to happen that I get their referrals.

Dave:

So, what happens here is when a conventional spine doc comes across someone who doesn't get better and doesn't respond right in his, the so-called hard case, they send them to you even though you're not doing the, "Let me just use your entire spine. Don't worry, it won't hurt," kind of practice, right?

Marcella:

Correct, 100%.

Dave:

What percentage of people come across back pain in their life? I made up some statistics earlier, but you probably, actually, know.

Marcella:

It is between 80% and 100%. I think the last time I looked to that, it's close to a 100, because it's so varied. I mean, again, the root cause thing, conventional medicine doesn't really know fully. We know some things. We know the very obvious red flags, tumors, infections.

But the broad, broad swath of people that have back pain, which is pretty much everybody's going to experience at least one episode at some time in their life. We don't really know fully what's causing it, or at least we're digging into it now, and what we're doing here and my practice.

Dave:

It can be really debilitating. When I was in my early 20s, I felt like there's a candle burning between my shoulder blades all the time because I had a rib head out and it would just go out. It turns out that was caused largely by my environment, and my diet. But just for five years straight it was just a constant mean pain.

And I thought, that was really bad, and it was. And then, oh, maybe three, four years ago, one of our pigs had escaped. Yes, the life of a farmer is tough. And we're working on getting back in, and I'm pushing on this pig, and suddenly, it just moves.

And so, I'm going to faceplant in the mud. Fortunately, there's no video of this. And I'm like, "Okay, I got this." So, I kicked one of my legs back really strong to counterbalance me and I sprained my spine when I did that. I didn't know, I sprained it. But for the next eight months, it was like the kind of pain that makes you turn green.

And you guys didn't see it on the podcast here. But sometimes, I was wearing like a back brace. And I mean, just walking, riding a bike, anything. It was nasty. And that's the thing that could just hurt forever. What would you do with someone who sprains their spine like that? Because this happens to a lot of people.

Marcella:

Great question. It happens to a lot of people. And one of the key interesting things that I discovered in my conventional practice was, there are people who can have an event like that, and they're down for a couple days. They take some Advil, and then they're back to their life. And their body's natural healing systems are robust, and they just go on and they're fine.

And then, there are other people that that happens too and it never gets better. Or it gets better for a little while, or they try this, they try that. And it's just this ongoing thing. So, in our practice,

when we have an acute injury, and sometimes, we'll see people right away, what happens sometimes, they've done other things before they come.

The first thing we look at is, overall body inflammation and where they're at with their whole health. And so, my patient base is broad. We have some people who are biohackers, like you who are doing everything, tip top, anti-inflammatory, diet, great exercise, stalking different things at home called plunges, and all different kinds of things. And then, we have other patients who have never heard that your food can increase inflammation in your body and can cause you to have pain.

So, we do a history and we discuss deeply, what are their different things that could be contributing. We look at what their mind body practices are like. We look at how much stress is in their life. We look at what was going on in their life at that time of the injury and why the injury may have happened. And we look at again, diet, as I just mentioned. And then, put that all together and come up with a treatment plan that is specific to where they're at in terms of their whole health. That's step one.

Dave:

Now, your clinic is called Austin Integrative Spine. But I went to see you recently not for my spine, which fortunately fully recovered. Thank you stem cells and biohacking and red lights and all other crazy stuff that I do. But I had surgery and I'm still working on the documentary about how to heal really rapidly. I had surgery on my foot for a really old yoga injury that I just never actually took care of. There's a classical functional movement problem.

And in the world of biohacking, you don't make enough energy in your cells to do stuff. That's a core like that's one of my big contributions, I think is just highlighting mitochondria in the brain and all these things. But even if you make enough energy, if you still walk like a duck, the way that I did when I was young and probably, still do to a certain point, you're not using an energy to move your hardware, right?

So, when you get the system right, your cells make energy with near perfect efficiency. And then, you move your body like a martial artist or a dancer when they're perfect efficiency, right? And that means tons of extra electrons that would have been used wastefully are now available for, I don't know, folding proteins, detoxing, thinking good thoughts, restraining the urge to strangle any politicians near you. All of those things are really, really important parts of it. I miss functional movement. And I'm still working on that on a regular basis.

So, when I went to see you, but yeah, it's Austin Integrative Spine, we know each other, but I wasn't interested in my spine. You actually, did stuff on my leg. And the method that you're just pioneering is called the Aqua method, something you created. So, it's not a spinal thing. It's a whole-body functional movement thing. Tell me what the Aqua Method is. I think I know because I just did it. And it was really cool, but walk me through it.

Marcella:

Yes. So, we came up with the term Aqua to really give a description of what we're trying to create in the body and that is more fluidity. And also, water, aqua is pure. It's intense at times depending on the form. And it is soothing at times depending on the form. And that is how our treatment goes.

So, we divided it into four sections, and I can go through those one at a time, or I can go through them, and we can pause in between. The first section is what we call reveal. And the whole treatment is composed of me and two additional practitioners. One is a doctor of chiropractic medicine, incredibly gifted in functional tissue mobilization. And then, the other is a personal trainer, elite Performance

Trainer as well with a rehab capability, and also a massage therapist. So, all of that wrapped up into one guy, and that's Matt Lindamood. Dr. Joy Mattina, and Matt Lindamood.

And so, in the first phase of the Aqua Method called Reveal, you get the three of us in a room together with our varied expertise, looking at your whole body, looking at... So, for you, you have a toe that has been injured, abnormal for a significant amount of time. And what we see with your movement is, you have these patterns that have developed over a long period of time of dealing with this toe. And that pattern is across your entire body. It's not just the toe, as you said, it's the knee, it's the hip, it's the core, it's the back.

So, the three of us are looking at your structure, what I know about the anatomy. We're looking at your movement patterns, and then we're looking at what tissues are involved, putting that picture together to make a treatment plan for the next phase.

Dave:

Okay, so Reveal is figuring out what's going on that isn't it hurts here, let's cut that out.

Marcella:

100%, 100%.

Dave:

Okay. All right. I like that. So, Reveal is the first step. And that's functional movement, elite movement analysis.

Marcella:

Correct.

Dave:

So, what we figured out when I was there is that, I wasn't firing certain muscles in my shin, because my body learned not to do that, probably when I was in my late teens, early 20s, because of an earlier injury, right? So then, the body, "So, I'm going to protect this," and it never stops protecting.

Marcella:

Yes.

Dave:

In physical therapy is supposed to do that, but it doesn't really. So, you guys are able to spot that for me. All right.

Marcella:

Yes.

Dave:

So, that was the Reveal. And then, what's the next step of this?

Marcella:

So, the next step is called Restore. And in this phase, we do the photobiomodulated, platelet rich plasma treatment, which is an IV. We draw your blood, spin it down, get the PRP fraction, shine a very specialized laser with a very specialized waveform through that to activate the PRP. And we can talk more about the science of what's going on there. And then, some basic science what might be going on there as well.

Then, we re-inject that activated PRP into your IV, and then shine the same very specific laser over the different body parts of interest that we have identified in the Reveal phase. At the same time, that we're shining the laser to target the anti-inflammatory effects of the PRP. We are also with Dr. Mattina doing that functional tissue mobilization.

So, you're getting the benefit of a molecular biologic treatment of the activated PRP and the tissue compression, pushing out the inflammatory molecules through the lymphatic system and creating another way for the biologic activity to be drawn to that place as he's doing the tissue mobilization. So, it's a combined effect of a biologic going in through the veins, as well as the external compression. And frankly, the healing, nervous system changes that happen with manual treatments is very powerful at one time.

Dave:

Okay, and the idea of a special laser could be triggering for some people, let's say. But that's not how it works.

Marcella:

Totally, totally.

Dave:

But the reality is that, photobiomodulation, 25 years ago, you could only do it on racehorses, and the history of all the cool biohacks if it wasn't from like the Russian military in the 50s and 60s, a lot of it really did come from racehorses, because you have a multimillion-dollar thing, their little injury, any little performance.

So, my first medical laser was only approved for use on horses, and it fixed my whiplash in two or three sessions. Just amazing stuff, that's why I bought it. It was actually, cheaper than going to a chiropractor hundred times in front. I support chiropractors, but the ones with lasers are my favorites.

So, lasers just work, LEDs work, true light. My light therapy company has all kinds of stuff like x-rays, probably off camera. Our new our new clinical device right here that I'm dropping on the floor. So, what's going on is, there is tons of science to say that that's real. What Marcella has got with the Aqua Method is a very unusual thing. And I've actually, seen photos of cells lining up and all sorts of crazy stuff happening.

So, I'm just going to say that more than passes the credibility tests. At this point, you can buy FDA approved lasers for use on humans with approved claims. And it's just, this is a new world. And it wasn't always like this. It did go through a big phase of resistance from doctors like Marcella, whatever, 20 years ago or something, but it's just real. How did you become convinced that this laser treated PRP was any different than PRP where you blow fairy kisses on it?

Marcella:

Great question. In my training to use this new technology with the creator of it, we experienced some really profound healing examples when I was working with him with patients. One particular example is

a patient who came to me with a herniated disc, a lumbar disc, and was pretty far along in his healing process. He had improved from the beginning, in terms of the symptoms, but his scan was very clearly surgical in a very large disc. He still had symptoms.

That guy would walk into any surgeon's office and be offered an operation. And that's not wrong. I mean, it was totally reasonable thing. But he was very convinced that he wanted to try absolutely everything first. And he had an incredible result with one treatment with the inventor of this laser, Dr. Todd Ovokaitys.

So, in my initial experience with it, I saw impressive results, not just with back pain. That doctor has also studied cardiomyopathy in patients that need cardiac transplants and shown improvement with his laser activated PRP on cardiac output. And I've seen those results.

So, there's a myriad of data that he's been collecting for several years. And so, I reviewed that, and then had some hands-on experience. And then, once I started using it myself, we've now with the Aqua method, we've treated several patients who have been recommended surgery, and we're getting them better without surgery. So, I'm sold.

Dave:

I am not opposed to surgery. However, it should be a last line, not a first line. And I regret to this day, the three knee surgeries that I had, because none of them were necessary knowing what I know now about functional movement. And in this podcast, guys, you're going to learn about functional movement, and you're going to learn about some new stuff that's possible.

You don't necessarily have to do everything that we talked about in the Aqua Method in order to get some results. In fact, if most listeners just said, "You know? I'm going to go find a functional movement person, and I'm going to do five sessions." It's going to completely change the quality of your life. It's that big of a thing, because you just don't know the muscles that are turned off.

And sometimes, one session, you can activate a muscle and all of a sudden, your brain is like, "Oh, I didn't know I have that." And then, it's available to you. It's really weird. Yoga can kind of do it, but it takes a long time. Now, function movement, people are very, very powerful. And what you're doing that I haven't seen before with the Aqua Method is having that functional awareness as you're guiding the cells. And as the body is in massive healing and transformation mode, rather than just about to heal what you know, you've got, like, maybe we could show you what you've got.

Marcella:

Yes.

Dave:

So, the body will then heal the things that need it. And that's a new innovation. So, given that preamble, what is the cost of the Aqua Method? What does it start?

Marcella:

\$20,000 is the start, and that is a three-day immersive experience. We do the PBM, PRP on the first day. And there's also a mind, body, spirit component, which we can dig into. The second day, and so there's PBM, PRP, mind, body, spirit, functional tissue mobilization, functional movement, that's all day one. Then, day two, and day three, we continue with the functional tissue mobilization, the laser, and the mind, body, spirit decoding piece.

So, again, first day we do the PBM, PRP, and the second two days, we continue everything else. And then, after that, we also include two more sessions via Zoom with our functional or with our gifted rehab and movement specialist trainer. So, it's not just those days that you're here with us in the office. We really empower you to carry it forward, teach you how to maintain your results in your own environment.

Dave:

So, this is three full days with two MDs and a high-end functional trainer, which is why it's meaningful amount of money. You can use HSPs and HSAs for this? I'm guessing. In the US, those were the health savings accounts.

Marcella:

Yeah, we absolutely can.

Dave:

And it's not insurable, right?

Marcella:

Right. So, no insurance, but you can use your HSA. And just for clarity, it's an MD, DC, a Doctor of Chiropractic...

Dave:

Okay, thank you.

Marcella:

And then, a trainer. Yeah, elite.

Dave:

One thing I totally love is how like real MDs like to talk down to naturopaths and chiropractors, do they teach you that medical school, Marcella? I'm just...

Marcella:

Actually, I mean, they don't teach it, obviously. But there is an undercurrent, and it's unfortunate, because I can tell, I mean, Dr. Harry is my...

Dave:

I'm just lucky with you.

Marcella:

He's like, one of my earliest mentors, and I adore him. And he's a naturopath. And I've gotten incredible knowledge base from my area.

Dave:

Harry Adelson has been on this show lots of times, right? He's one of the early stem cell innovators, who I see quite often as well.

Marcella:

Yes.

Dave:

So, a mutual friend, and source of knowledge. So, I was just teasing you. My wife is a medical doctor as well. And there's always this... I would just go for longer than they did. And they're like, "Yeah, but we actually treat people and you just give them drugs." So, it's a longstanding, friendly rivalry that sometimes is unfriendly when the American Medical Association, which is basically the trade union for doctors, when they get involved, and try and destroy acupuncture and chiropractic.

Guys, there's room for everyone. There's lots and lots of people who are not well, and there's lots of ways to fix them. And we can all just chill. So, you're actually very, very open to that. I was just putting words in your mouth, because that's my latest hobby.

Marcella:

It's all good. We're in a space of collaboration. And that one of my, or my trainer actually introduced me to The Medici Effect, that wonderful book that talks about great ideas come from varied people getting together from very, very different perspectives. And that's what we've created with this process.

Dave:

There are a few people from the Upgrade Collective saying, "Can you do this remotely?" I would say, it wouldn't even be possible.

Marcella:

No.

Dave:

I mean, there's injections and spinning of blood and lasers do not shoot through Zoom. You can remote...

Marcella:

After 20 years, we'll do it. That's a goal. Thank you for the question.

Dave:

If your iPhone will be implanted and have little glands to secrete 3D printed molecules. It's going to be kind of weird, especially if either Apple or Facebook is in charge, or Microsoft, or Google. Geez, we're screwed no matter what we do.

Marcella:

We can do it in the Metaverse, maybe. I don't know.

Dave:

And is this kind of laser something that anyone would buy, or could buy at home? Or is this specifically for treating blood and tissues?

Marcella:

Great question. Right now, it is extremely limited. I think there are 10 or fewer practitioners in the world with it, and we're very grateful to have one. The creator of it is working on a way to have a higher number of practitioners, have the availability to have it. It has to do with the optics, and how specialized it is, and be able to build multiple ones. So, right now, very limited.

Dave:

There's also a whole bunch of medical devices that are out there where it's just not reasonable. There's a lot of the stuff you can use for your skin, it starts at \$150,000. And you go somewhere and you use it. And this is that kind of laser. For most home therapy, LEDs work really well, especially when they're well made. That's the whole reason I started true light. But they don't do what this does. This is a medical laser versus something you can use at home for inflammation.

Marcella:

Right.

Dave:

And so, you do that. And you also do some energy medicine work that's pretty out there. I mean, you're like I'm holding space, and is there a trauma Titan? So, tell me about some of the woo, that's in here? Because I actually, think it makes a huge difference.

Marcella:

Yes, thank you for the question. So, I have an extensive history of studying an ancient Chinese energy technique, that's Energy for Success. Dr. Barry Morguelan, who I know you've interviewed several times.

Dave:

This was the first podcast he's ever been on, by the way.

Marcella:

Oh, that's even better.

Dave:

Thank you. Yeah, Dr. B.

Marcella:

Doctor B. So, I started studying under him personally, just for my own growth, almost eight years ago now. And over time, I got such great benefit from it myself that I started introducing it to my patients, who are interested in mind, body optimization. And so, over time that evolved into adding some of those practices to our treatments.

And so, as it exists right now, as part of the Aqua Method, what we do is as soon as the patient arrives, we have them do a guided visualization or breathing exercise. They really get their mind and

body ready. Get in that calm, nervous system. There's always even what we're talking about something wonderful and healing, there's anxiety before you have a procedure.

And so, we really try to create a peaceful environment for the person to get ready to accept the treatment. We also include a goal writing session as part of the treatment. So, it's not just, I want my knee pain to go away. It's like, "Okay, if you had your knee better than you could imagine, if your knee was perfect, what does that mean for your life? What would you imagine yourself doing? How would that support you in whatever goals you have in your life?"

And Amy McAbeer, who works with us who's our chief guidance person for this process. She has a master's in health education. She has a Reiki experience. She has energy for success experience. She has a wide variety of mind, body, spirit abilities. She walks you through what you're trying to get out of the procedure beyond just pain. And that is one of the goal writing practices, one of the Chinese energy thing.

And then, in addition to that, during the procedure, we read aloud your goals as we're activating the PRP. And during the Restore phase, as well as the Revitalize phase over the next two days, when we're doing the functional tissue mobilization with Dr. Mattina, and as I'm shining the laser, we are talking through a possible psychological root of what is going on with you. And this is a process called biologic decoding.

And my interest in this came from over many, many years with my conventional practice, everybody knows, when you have a stress in your life, something hurts, and you might have an old injury that perks back up, or you might have something new that happened, it just happened to happen at the same time as you're going through this massive breakup. Or the same time a loved one dies, the next month, you have this, you get a cold, for example. Your body reacts to psychological stress.

And this is something that I knew for a long time instinctively. And then, I found that there is actually a field of somewhat esoteric medical science that has studied this. And so, we've incorporated this discussion during the treatment. So, by the end, the patient's has experienced a release of whatever that thing possibly that was contributing, as well as an action plan for in the future, how to take what we discovered to make it work for them.

Dave:

I really appreciate that about the Aqua Method. And again, if you're listening to this going, wait a minute, I have a John Hopkins trained neurosurgeon who is licensed to go inside your brain with an eggbeater, if necessary, whatever you think it's medically required, who's talking about this stuff? Yeah.

Any massage therapists will tell you just take the average person, especially women, but it's men and women and work the hips really well. And people start crying for no reason, right? Because we saw emotions, especially in our hip joints, why? Who the hell knows? The human operating system is still largely opaque to us for where we're sitting.

But there's two people, one Western, one more esoteric, that support what you're doing here, aside from Dr. B, who's UCLA surgeon and Chinese Energy Master. But when is Dr. Sarno from Harvard, who wrote a very famous book about pain, and he's well-known for taking people who've been in chronic intractable pain for years, he'll talk to them for an hour, and their pain is gone forever.

Now, if that's possible, for even a dozen people, there is something else going on then, deficiency and opiates and surgery. It's just how it is. And he's got really fantastic evidence, like clinical trials for what he does. And so, there's one proof point for you. The other one is more personal development. But Louise Hay has a series of books that say, "Oh, if you have pain here, look at these emotions." And then, they do trauma release work or emotional work on those.

And sometimes, we get into that, at 40 Years of Zen, my neuroscience practice. And, wow, there you go. Again, you see these weird results and why? If your knee hurts, does it mean, Mommy didn't love me, I don't remember what knee pain particularly means. But there's some mapping and you just look there. And you might find something or that might not be why.

But the idea that you're taking functional movement, which is its own beast, and this energetic, hey, maybe there's something else going on here that's environmental, not physical, environmental, but energy environment. And just saying, let's throw everything at it all at the same time while you're in a massive healing thing from the laser and the activated PRP cells. This is exactly the biohacking approach.

What you learned in med school would have been, let's test the energy. Let's test whether functional movement works, and let's test whether the activated PRP works. And none of them worked. I guess, you're sick for life. But instead, you're saying, let's throw everything at it that might be in there. And that's what I do with all the stuff that made me better.

So, kudos for being an MD, who broke through that that single cause, dogma and religion that's driving a lot of big pharma, and a lot of Western medicine where there must be one thing, there is no proof that it must be one thing, none, whatsoever. We just make that assumption and proceed as if that's the way the world was. That's just a false lens.

So, you totally broke through that, which is really cool. And you can feel it, when you go in to do it, it's not like a normal procedure. I've had probably more stem cells and most people alive, if not anyone alive at this point. And what I really see is, you go in there, and it doesn't look like a normal procedure, because you really have people meditating, and people, you hear, "Move this the right way. And what feeling is coming up here?" It's a different beast. That's why the Aqua Method was worth the show, because it's really cool. I'm seeing a couple of questions here. I'm old spinal cord injuries, what happens if you apply this to one of those?

Marcella:

Thank you. Yeah, great question. So, the results that we're seeing with this activated PRP in spinal cord injury have been really impressive. I will say, incomplete injuries. Meaning, a complete injury is where at the level of the lesion. There's no motor sensory function. And incomplete lesion is where there is some.

And even if it's small, we are seeing a stronger result in the incompletes than the completes. That said, we're at about and I would think about an 85% response rate in all comers. So, there are some, then what that response is, is variable. So, in our completes, it might be just a sensory change. In our incompletes, we've had people that 10 years out from an injury have done everything else, have had iterative progress along the way. And then, they get this procedure, and they have a big jump in their recovery.

And we see that over and over with the incompletes. It's a very nuanced discussion. It's very patient specific. It's very injury specific. But we do have a series of spinal cord patients that we're actually thrilled to, hopefully, present to the Conventional Medical Community once the data is fully collected. So, thank you for the question.

Dave:

So, you're only getting an 85% response in people spinal cord injury? That's like B, that's not even A, Marcella. I thought you were like, a Board-Certified Spinal genius, and you're only getting a B?

Marcella:

Yup, yup. And there are some non-responders. And I think that's really, really, important to say. But honestly, for people that have nothing else, it's freaking over the top. We're over the top, I'm happy about it.

Dave:

That's unprecedented compared to anything else you've done as a surgeon, right?

Marcella:

Yeah, because these are patients that are past their surgical. Most patients that want to have a spinal cord injury, they've had surgery at that time of their injury, appropriately, to stabilize the spine. And so, what we're tackling is the ongoing lack of neurologic recovery.

And I will say, too, this is not a one and done thing. It's not we do one procedure, and they're running a marathon. It's a process. A lot of our patients end up having multiple procedures. So, that's important to understand. The more severe, the more we end up having to move forward. And this is new, we're still in the data collection phase.

Dave:

I'm still stuck on the fact that you actually, use the word freaking in conversation about lasers. So, we have to get lasers. Okay, do you know how cool that is, Marcella?

Marcella:

I love it. It's my life. It's a lot of fun around here.

Dave:

I definitely saw that when I went in to get the Aqua Method done. And it's an example of what's possible, because you could say, "Okay, this is expensive." But how much would you build for a full-on spinal surgery for one of these people?

Marcella:

Yeah, great question. I mean, we could get into a whole discussion of like, where does the money come from when you use insurance, and how much does it actually cost? But certainly, a lumbar fusion and several of our patients that we have treated have been quoted elsewhere, that they need a lumbar fusion. The standard cost to the system of a lumbar fusion is at least \$100,000. Maybe, you can get it down if they're an outpatient surgery center, and you do something minimally invasive.

For a lumbar decompression, that might be \$30,000 to \$50,000. And again, you can get it lower if there are certain things you can do. So, this is in terms of cost, we're probably on par with the lowest price of a minimally invasive surgery in terms of cost to the system. But, I mean, cost to you and your body and the invasiveness, that's a no brainer. It's way, way, way less.

Dave:

So, this is running around 20% the cost of a common spinal procedures, and at the very cheapest, minimal spinal procedure in the West, this is on par with that, but you only have this 85% response sort of thing. It takes, usually, you seek like a generation of doctors dying? So, there's like a 25-year cycle. But with social media and all this, I think it's down to about seven years, where things like light therapy can become commonly accepted where you go back seven, 10 years, it was only crazy people.

So, we're tightening the cycle, and part of the role of this show and my work, just writing books and all this, they look, "No, this is real. This is happening, you don't know about it because the information isn't distributed." So, you're doing something new and special, by bringing the functional move in with this. Now, you talked about Reveal and Restore the first two parts of Aqua method, but there's two more. What is Revitalize?

Marcella:

Yes. So, Revitalize is really the addition of the movement to now a system that is different. And so, to recap, in Restore, we're using the laser activated PRP, the functional tissue mobilization. Those things together are creating more fluidity in the tissue, and they're washing out inflammation, and they're adding the healing capacity of the laser activated PRP. What that does is creates a new baseline in which you can add movement.

So, we're creating a space where movement patterns now that are better for you that are more like your body was intended to move are able to get in there and we do it right away. So, immediately, after we finished the... Dr. Mattina and myself working together, then that works with you to give you an intro into some movements to let your nervous system feel safe and better doing movements that you didn't do before.

So, in the Restore piece, we're like resetting the nervous system. Another part of it is washing out neurotransmitter signals that are causing pain. Usually, after Restore, people feel somewhat better right away. And then, we're adding in Revitalize. We're adding movements that you're able to do that you couldn't do before to set it in in a more normal physiologic state.

And then, we do that same process with a laser, Dr. Mattina working on you in the tissue, and then, the movement. Afterwards, you do that again, two more times. That's the second two days with Revitalize. And so, on the second two days, you actually get a longer training session and the movement takes the bigger role as your brain is able to take in a lot of new information on the second two days.

Dave:

So, then what is Revel, the final step, to get four hours in the Aqua Method?

Marcella:

Yes, thank you. So, Revel has several key pieces. And one of the things that I want to add about Revitalize is that, we're continuing the mind, body, spirit, the biologic decoding during those second two days, so that by the time we get to Revel, we're able to put it all together and really celebrate what we learned and teach you how to take it forward.

So, part of the biologic decoding and that psychological discussion is we give you a very specific few sentences that encapsulate what you've learned about your body that are positives to take forward to reinforce those new neural pathways. So, in Revel we're celebrating. We're teaching you how to take it forward. And then, also, there's two additional movement sessions that happen remotely in the first two weeks. It's very important that we get them accomplished in the first two weeks to really dial in that movement in your own environment and your own space, you can continue to do it yourself going forward. So, we're celebrating. Plus, we're teaching you how to continue to make it stick and move forward.

Dave:

One of the things that I would love to see more of in the world at large, and I'm speaking in part to the thousands or so, Human Potential Institute coaches, that have gone through my program. But just out there, all the people are in caregiving professions. The hardest part was something like the Aqua Method is, you go through, you have these amazing results, and then you're supposed to do some kind of movements like three times a week, but you don't really actually, do it. There's a lot of friction. And accountability is a major part of it.

So, if you're a coach, or you're not a coach, but you're looking for a coach, find a coach, that Human Potential Institute, it's a good place to do that. And just say like, "I got this cool video when I did the Aqua Method with Marcella, but I want you to like on our sessions, either track whether I did it or just make me do it when we're on a Zoom session." And that really changes the results.

You can be one of those people says, "I will self-motivate for everything." I'm just going to tell you; it comes at a cost. Using willpower to do stuff is dumb, having a coach who helps you write down your goals, which helps in and of itself, and then a coach who just holds you accountable to your goals. So, you don't have to hold yourself accountable. You might find amazing results.

So, I haven't had as many follow ups as I would have liked, mostly because I'm bad at scheduling stuff with Matt. And I would just say, anytime you're doing a movement practice, you're supposed to do something yourself. Do with a friend, do with an accountability partner, it's a massive change.

Marcella:

Absolutely.

Dave:

And if you're a member of, I don't know, like, maybe The Upgrade Collective. My mentorship group, we hold each other accountable. We have weekly coaching calls. We bring in experts like you who will give a lecture. And then, we actually, have accountability calls afterwards. So, we can talk about how it's working, because it's much easier to do this in a community.

So, if you get specialized knowledge, work with a specialized person to help you. And if it's general functional movement knowledge, you can actually do that with friends. And I want you to teach something that everyone can do, even if they never come to Austin to see you. So, tell me something like, I don't know, a breathing exercise or a movement exercise, something useful.

Marcella:

Okay. So, we can do this as a combo. So, part of this is an ancient Chinese energy practice that has these healing vibrations from the Dr. Morguelan Energy for Success paradigm. And then, part of this is the functional movement and how to stabilize your body.

So, one of the key, key things that is important for any movement is that, you stabilize your core first, and that's one of the... And you've heard that before. This is not new information. But the way that you stabilize your core is not always taught this way. So, that's what we're going to start with.

So, you're going to imagine... Let's see, if I can aim down a little bit. You're going to imagine a coke can that your abdomen is a coke can. And so, you're imagining it like this. And instead of sucking in, you're going to push out 360 degrees.

Dave:

Okay, so you're pushing out your ribs, but also your back ribs. For me, this was really transformative.

Marcella:

And it's low. It's like, if you think of where your ribs and I'm going to sit up a little. If your ribs end here, you're really down here, this is my belly button, it's right here. So, you're right here, and you're expanding 360 degrees around your spine. And Matt calls this giving your spine a hug. And it's very different than the classic aerobics girl thing of sucking your belly in. That's not what we're doing.

We're actually expanding the belly out like a tire or is another way we like to say it as a Coke can. So, you're expanding your whole core, and you should be able to feel it back there too. Yes.

Dave:

It's like, it's back here. For me, this was really, really interesting, because I found that I was mostly a front breather. Guys, I spent five years every morning doing art of living breathing exercises, and I've done all the different yoga poses you can name. But I was still, I had a bad functional breathing pattern that Marcella and her team showed me. And, of course, we shine the laser at me while I was doing that. So, that coke and breathing, I kind of, Budweiser can. You're in Texas.

Marcella:

We probably should be something healthier. I don't know, Kombucha can or what do you like that comes into can? Is there anything you like that comes in a can?

Dave:

Cold brew coffee can. I mean, geez, come on...

Marcella:

Cold brew, yeah, there you go. Cold brew coffee.

Dave:

But it's a perfect cylinder kind of thing. And so, taking a deep breath in, and do you need to be sitting or standing? What works better?

Marcella:

So, a great thing about this method is that, once you learn it, when you first start, you might do it lying down first. You can really feel your back expanding to the ground as you do it, because you're used to filling it in the front. Everybody thinks core front. But it's all the way around.

So, you can start with lying down as you're learning. And then, as you get more used to it, you will find yourself engaging this all the time. And so, I find now when I'm driving, and I'm checking my mirrors, I'm always doing my Coke can, and then I turn my head to look in my blind spot.

And so, that's lead into the Chinese energy part of this exercise. If you're sitting, you can do it as I said, lying down, sitting, standing. But for now, sitting. You have your Coke can expanded, and your breathing, and keeping the Coke can expanded while you're breathing. And then, you turn your head all the way to one side and you say out loud each day, "I go farther." And you do the same on the other side, "Each day I go further." And that is Chinese exercise. We're not hearing you, Dave at the moment. Oh, there you go.

Dave:

That's all right. I was just making sure the noise on its end was managed, so we're good.

Marcella:

Okay, cool.

Dave:

So, but basically, while your lungs are full, you're turning head sideways?

Marcella:

It's more like, you're breathing with your Coke can extended. So, you can just breathe. It's like practicing the breathing, while you're doing something else. And you're turning your head to both sides slowly. And then, as you get to the end of your range of motion, you're saying, "Each day I go further."

So, that it's adding the core activation to the neck motion. And when you are activating your core, you're taking the stress off of your joints and adding the spreading out the stress across your fascia. Everything is connected in the body, right? So, even you might find like, say you have neck pain, you might find if you engage your core before you turn your head, your neck doesn't hurt as much. So, those are two things put together.

Dave:

That's some actionable stuff that you can do whether or not you ever go to Austin, and I really work on any books that I write on any show. I'm going to talk about the highest and most cutting-edge stuff in the world, because that shows what's possible, but it always teaches us mechanisms of action.

So, what you can do, for instance, if you're not going to go get stem cells right now, because it's expensive. How can you activate the ones you have better? Intermittent fasting does that. So, there's always a free way to take advantage of new knowledge. And then, there's ways that highlight how far we can take it, which are always by definition, going to be the most expensive and esoteric things in the world. That's how new knowledge percolates down, right?

The first car you could buy was really expensive. And then, we had the Model A Ford and the Model T Ford, and pretty soon, everyone could get one over time. And so, it's the same kind of evolution of these technologies, which is pretty amazing that we can spread this globally in a conversation instead of having to wait for someone to hear about it in your country.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about just pain in general. I've had a chance to consult with a bunch of pain docs at conferences or American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, if I'm lecturing or whatever. And guys, speaker, I'm no doctor. I don't have a medical license. You can't take my license if I say something.

So, as soon as I say weird things, but I have seen ridiculous results from just good old fashioned, red, Amber infrared light therapy in combination with toxin-binding protocols that are part of biohacking, like activated charcoal or taking more glutathione or calcium D-glucarate or more glycine rich collagen. Those are the top three detox pathways.

Universally, people in chronic pain, you turn up detox, use red light therapy, they seem to get better, unless it's an emotional trauma. So, what are you doing around the inflammatory triggers? The things that were binding or detoxing there as a part of the Aqua method?

Marcella:

So, great question. When we start with a patient, before we get you hear in person, we will do a full medical consult, which is an hour and a half. We look at a lot of very specific details about your life, your day-to-day stress, your inflammatory state. Are you possibly somebody with a highly reactive? Some people call that SIRS, chronic inflammatory response syndrome.

It's a very careful medical investigation, to see what do we need to do to new up, to make sure that we have massive success with the treatment. And I will say in patients that are highly inflamed, if it's somebody that has never heard, and this wouldn't be your audience, but for example, you're referring a friend or something, somebody who's never broached the subject of body inflammation, we would highly recommend the anti-inflammatory diet, leading up to and after. And we recommend that for everybody.

But especially if somebody's never heard of before, we get a full functional medicine lab panel. We look at hormones. We look at inflammatory markers. We recommend the anti-inflammatory diet depending on where they're at, which diet we recommend. Very often it's bulletproof. And so...

Dave:

I would just add that inflammatory response syndrome, I have whole body inflammation. I'm constantly managing it. Otherwise, I would probably, be either on disability or heading for an early death. It's that big of a deal if you have this. And if you have it, you probably don't know it. You keep getting sick, until at one point, "I'm so sick, I can't do much." And then, you realized, "Oh, my God, I have a much bigger problem."

So, if you if think it's normal to be in pain, it turns out there are people who walk around who don't hurt all the time. I never knew that, because I never experienced that until I got this biohacking thing going.

Marcella:

Yeah, yeah. So, it's really important to do that very detailed medical evaluation. And then, we base our treatment plan on that. Sometimes, I will refer to extremely gifted SIRS specialists because I feel like, if that has never been touched before, if it's never been diagnosed before, if they have mold toxicity, if they need mold remediation, and that's obvious, they haven't done it yet.

It's important to at least look into it, and make a plan because we can do this beautiful procedure, and it's a big investment. And if we send you right back into your inflammatory space, you're going to recur, and I know, we don't want that for you. So, we investigate it carefully. And then, we make a plan based on what we find.

Dave:

Who are some of your favorite Austin mold people? I'm guessing, Ann Shippy is probably on the list. She's been on the show because I think she has. She's one of my go-to people there because she's an IBM Chemical Engineer turned MD. So, oh, maybe knows a thing or two about toxins, right? Who else is good in the Austin that you want to refer to?

Marcella:

Yes, great question. So, Dr. Ann Shippy is wonderful. And then, also Dr. Eleanor Womack, those are my top two. And Dr. Womack's practice is called Westlake Medical Arts. And she has, they also run the Hyperbaric Center, ATX Hyperbarics, which is wonderful that we have a full on highly wonderful hyperbaric center here.

Dave:

So, do you see results with chronic pain? I'm guessing, just because of the spinal stuff you do. It's pretty big, but I don't really know.

Marcella:

Yeah, so great question. So, as I was preparing for the podcast, I was looking back at our patients that have gone through this process. And what I did not realize when we started was what type of dent would we make in patients with chronic pain that... There's one set of patients with chronic pain that have maybe six months of pain, and it started at certain time, and you know why, and then you treat it and it gets better. And that might be called chronic pain. But actually, for me, that's more of like, acute if it's less than a year because we have a distinct start and finish.

So, when we look at that population that is very easy to treat with us. And our response rate is 100%, meaning everybody has responded. And in that population, we're getting like, I would say, 70% to 100% of improvement. Meaning, they're 70, or more percent better if their pains have been around for six months or so. So, that in my mind, that's more acute.

In our chronic patients, who've had pain for many, many years, whether it's from RSD, which has Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy, a very disabling pain, abnormal nervous system thing. We've had chronic neuropathy. We've had chronic back pain from previous surgeries or multiple other surgeries or previous surgery, and then adjacent segment disease. In those patients, we're still getting results, I would say between 30% and 70% improvement.

And these are people that there's nothing to do. They're on narcotics. There is nothing to do, other than that. And I didn't know how powerful it would be for that population. And I've been really thrilled with that.

Dave:

So, it generally works well for pain. And it makes sense because you're addressing emotional, environmental, nutritional and mechanical all at the same time, which is why I'm really interested in this, especially because you're a neurosurgeon who's saying this versus someone with dreadlocks. And I'm not saying anything wrong with those. People have been telling me I should do that. Just kidding. Don't think that's going to happen.

But there's a super hippy healing community, a bunch of people from different lineages and different traditions. But oftentimes, they don't pass muster of medical science. So, they get just not taken seriously even though it really works. In my path, I did all the Western stuff. I had my three surgeries. My pain got worse. My brain fog got worse. And finally, I'm like, "I'm going to do this stupid stuff that cannot possibly work."

So, I did acupuncture, and I went to Nepal and Tibet and learn meditation, drink yak butter tea, all the stuff, plant medicines in South America. Because I'm like, "I got nothing to lose." And it was only after coming back from all that, that I realized, okay, you have to do it all at once. But I've never seen a medical doctor going to this length, especially on the energetic front. I've just got to give you an extra shout out for making that part of the Aqua method.

Guys, it's hard to put words to it. But there's literally someone in there who's like doing energy work like what you would call holding space, if you're in that modality, if you've ever been in some kind of thing, that you're going, "Hold on, there's a 3D x-ray machine right here, and there's someone also energetically holding space for me." It's a little bit like, "Wait." But it works better than doing either one by itself, which is why I think this is noteworthy.

Marcella:

Thank you. We agree.

Dave:

Now, there's several questions here. And there's also a personal question around meniscus injuries. So, the thing underneath your kneecap that tends to get injured. I've had all three of my surgeries, they cleaned it up. But there's some new evidence around surgeries for that. What do you see around knee pain? What do you know about the Aqua Method and knees?

Marcella:

Great question. So, again, it's an individualized answer, depending on how severe it is. We definitely have treated some knees with good results. And what I find is the, it's a similar answer I gave earlier in terms of the spinal cords. The more severe you start, either more treatments you might need, or you have further to go. Very mild to moderate knee pain. We usually can wipe out, and that's whether it's a meniscus, whether it's a patellofemoral arthritis, whether it's just early joint or early osteoarthritis.

So, if it's mild, it can be treated with one treatment. Usually, if it's more on the moderate to severe side, we usually will make a dent in it, but we might do multiple treatments. And also, the same activated PRP can be used as an injection. And so, when we do our detailed medical consult, we'll look at it and say, "I feel like you might be more severe. So, maybe we should start with injections as opposed to starting with a noninvasive."

That said, with the Aqua Method, with the trainer, and with the Cairo, if it's mild-to-moderate, and we can rebuild the rest of your body to get you out of those compensation patterns and get your movement better, we can knock it out. So, it's individualized, but we've had success.

Dave:

There's also some new studies coming out, several really big ones showing that meniscus surgery is no more effective than placebo. So, the majority of those knee surgeries aren't necessarily working. That's not to say you don't need it. Of the three, that I had one of them actually, was necessary because a piece of my meniscus was caught in the joint. So, every time I'd straighten my leg, it really hurt. And that needed to be moved.

The other times like, the edges are rough, we'll just clean it up, no. It turns out to your energy work side of things, it's not well-known. But if you have an insufficiency of adrenal function, or a lack of cortisol, which is more common than you might think, cortisol is bad. Let's suppress it into zero equals you will die.

So, if that's low, your knees will be weak. And when you shore up your adrenal function, maybe with more salt, or adrenal extracts or herbs, magically, your knees stabilize. And that's pretty crazy. And what about...

Marcella:

And I think he... Okay.

Dave:

Go ahead.

Marcella:

I was going to say, that's a key thing with no matter what body part, shoulder, knee, hip, back, what you see on the image is important, but it's one piece of data. The all the other data is how inflamed are you? What other joints are not working right? How long have you been in these patterns that aren't working for you? And what are the cells like? And if we can put an anti-inflammatory process on your cells and calm down the molecular problem and a cellular problem, you may not need the structure fixed with surgery.

So, it's a key distinction that the image is one piece of data, but it is not the whole story. And that's, again, part of why I started this practice, because I knew that over all my years in conventional medicine.

Dave:

I really like that. It's one of those things where I feel like you're hurting a flock of sheep or cats maybe, and you get this, "So, what's the one thing you can do?" Well, you can put up fencing, maybe, so you don't have to hurt them, but then you lose the ability to move around. Otherwise, it's not one thing you do, or you push it here, you push it there. I just find you're pushing more buttons at the same time than any other type of procedure like this.

So, it's a really cool thought. And I hope this inspires a lot of the medical doctors and other healers who listen to the show, and there's quite a few, and I'm really honored by that is to, alright, maybe it's okay to add a little bit of what you would call woo to your practice. And that if you do it, and you get better results, your patients are not going to run away. And the ones who do, it'll be 5% to 10% of your patients. They're the ones you didn't want as your patients, anyway.

And that's just how it is. It's okay to fire customers, who are actually actively interfering with the work you do, right? So, I just want to say that, put in better lighting. If you've like crystals, put a crystal in your waiting room. No one is going to say anything bad about you. They'll just think you're cooler and the world has changed. If you did that 20 years ago, they'd probably take your license, right?

Marcella:

That's right

Dave:

It's a safer place than it was for that and the world is more welcoming. And I think, that's why you can do what you're doing, and say, I am going to have people in here who are calming down your nervous system. So, the procedure works better. That's actually really cool.

Marcella:

Absolutely.

Dave:

Talk to me about how many beers, would be the right number of beers to have right after the procedure?

Marcella:

Yeah, so our protocol is, as I said earlier, anti-inflammatory diet of your choice, leading up to for at least two weeks and two weeks after, at a minimum. I really prefer no alcohol at all, during that process.

Everybody, you're grown adults, and you can make your own decisions, but we're really trying to not add extra inflammation that you just paid a whole bunch of money to calm down.

So, it's really, it's just like anything, you don't want to over stress the body and add a new injury that the cells or the PRP is going to go to, to treat. We want to treat the underlying. And so, get you as clean as possible for around a month around your procedure before and after.

Dave:

I really like that. I noticed improvements in my vision and some of my, I want to call them the really, subtle awareness things. If you meditate a lot, sometimes, you can just feel stuff more than other times. I'm trying to find the right words for it. But just basically, your awareness and perception of the world probably is a good way to put it.

So, I know the shifts after I did the treatment with you. That probably has to do with what's happening with the laser and the activated PRP. Can you go into that? What does it do for the brain? What have you noticed? And what science do we have that says that that's real?

Marcella:

Great question. So, this is where we go from what we have in terms of actual basic science data, and then what are instinctual and theoretical things that we think about what's going on with the laser and the gentleman who designed it. The waveform of the laser is very specific. It has to do with the holograms that are placed in a certain way on the inner workings of laser, where the laser is actually, able to penetrate much deeper than any other laser that's out there with this wavelength. That's a red laser, it's low energy. It doesn't create much heat. But it can penetrate deeply.

And the waveform, the theory is that, it is actually tuning the cells and aligning them with a particular vibration. And it's doing that across the path of the laser. So, there is some basic science that shows that the laser is actually, turning on, a type of stem cell called a very small embryonic stem cell. There is some basic science data to show that the cells are actually, more metabolically active after they've been... After the laser has shined on them.

And also, that the laser is able to increase cell adhesion molecules. If you look at what's coming out with quantum biology and the fact that the brain and neurons have, we used to think that everything was receptor/ligand. And now, we're starting to think that they're actually quantum systems that are ruling the way the neurons work.

My instinct is that, the laser is actually synchronizing what's going on in the nervous system. And what we're seeing as results from our anti-aging treatments with the laser activated PRP is, whatever goals the patient has in terms of what they want for their brain function, we're seeing results. So, it could be better memory. And these are people with normal healthy brains that want an upgrade.

We're seeing improved memory, improvement with second languages, better decision making was a report that we had. So, it's really powerful in the anti-aging space as well.

Dave:

And you're doing something else that's really cool. That I don't think and I don't know that I've seen any MDs do that. But you have a gift for people, if you guys decide you want to do this, you sold knock \$1,000 off the price, just use code Dave Asprey. And you can just, it's [austinintegrativespine.com](http://austinintegrativespine.com). Their phone number is 512-817-4600, if you want to reach out.

But thank you for that gift for Upgrade Collective members and people listening to the show. And I know it's a ton of money, it might be out of reach and you might not need it. I want you to know,

it's possible. And as time evolves, what Marcella is doing is going to become more and more available throughout the country, throughout the world. You just heard about it here first, which is part of it.

Marcella, thanks for sharing your knowledge and for having the courage to step out of the operating theatre, and do more than just that. I think it takes courageous people like you to just say, "I'm going to do this." And just say, "Look, it works. Here's the results we're getting 85%." Before, it's really difficult. Spinal injuries are improving. That's some evidence right there. Thanks, Marcella.

Marcella:

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you so much.

Dave:

If you like the episode, you make an appointment with a functional medicine practitioner in your neighborhood. You can do that and say, "Wow, what just happened?" And if you have an injury, and it's within reach, and maybe this is right for you. I just want to know it's possible, it's happening.

And there may be something similar in your neighborhood. And it's your job to find that, and to match whatever care you're getting, whatever you do for yourself and to yourself, whatever team of care providers you choose, it's up to you. And you can put it together. And it's my job to just let you know it's possible, and I'll make it as affordable as I can. And so, as Marcella with that gift for you.

Again, just use code, Dave Asprey, Austin Integrative Spine. And if not, find a functional movement practitioner, book two or three sessions, and see what happens. I'll see you guys on the next episode of the Human Upgrade. Thank you for listening. Thank you for your reviews. And if you haven't tried Danger Coffee yet, well, get in line. We just sold out. So, there's more coming in right now. [Dangercoffee.com](http://Dangercoffee.com). You're listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey.