

We are...

In the service of healing

BY GREGORY A. PLOTNIKOFF, MD, MTS, FACP

To be a physician today, like for all physicians that came before us, is to be professional in the service of healing.

What does this look like for me? As a former hospital chaplain, I am drawn to serving persons with complex, chronic and mysterious illnesses. As a med-peds physician, I am drawn to serving persons whose breadth of illness crosses multiple disciplines. For example, persons with simultaneous fatigue, pain, brain fog, insomnia, GI concerns and mood changes. I see people for whom “on average, for most people” approaches have not resulted in improved health.

In 2016, I established Minnesota Personalized Medicine, a private, independent practice. We intentionally serve those patients who, despite extensive medical evaluation, still suffer.

Our practice offers neither primary nor subspecialty care. We complement the vertical focus found in subspecialty care. We look horizontally. And we are a relief valve. We support the hard work of colleagues who are at risk of burnout.

I can offer patients time, commitment and curiosity. A typical first visit is 2.5 hours ... and has been as long as 5 hours. I gather a very in-depth history starting from *in utero*. This has turned out to be surprisingly helpful. A typical return visit is 60-90 minutes.

We practice integrative care. This means including non-pharmaceutical interventions to support optimal recovery. This can include rational use of supplements and/or specialized diets. I and my team address trauma and the spiritual concerns inherently found in chronic, disabling illness.

And we are intentionally different in our approaches. We use different language. For example, we measure vitals. We foster histories. We co-create action plans.

Incredible suffering comes through the door of our clinic. Why do I love my job? Because good things happen. And when they do, I like to celebrate. At the first visit, I point out to patients a special singing bowl in the office with a very happy tone. I note that when good things happen, we ring the bowl. This is a very powerful question: “What would it take to ring the bowl with you?”

Ringling this bowl is a deeply moving moment.

One additional ritual is essential in my professional life: Often, at the start of the clinic’s day, we gather for a

grounding meditation. If patients are present, they are invited to participate. We circle and express out loud or in our hearts our intentions for the day. Then, one person will say:

“Today, and every day,

for all who are here, and for all who come here,

May we be filled with the light of Love,

May we be guided and shown the way,

May we be granted Strength and Wisdom,

and the capacity, in our every act, to foster Health and Healing in our world.”

A special hand-made bowl with a particularly deep resonance, brought back from Japan, is rung. We stand and take in the sound. Then we do our best to make this so.

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