

A life interrupted: Susan's story

January 2019



The Hassell family (Miles, Anna, and Tor) wish you a healthy 2019. They've been busy working on the exercise component of self-health-care and are about to snack on some Roasted Umami Almonds. (See recipe further on.)

Susan's life up-ended in a split second

"I was 53 last summer – healthy, fit, and busy, with relatively few needs for a doctor apart from dealing with migraines or the occasional flu. Then, on one beautiful Saturday morning, I slipped on my steep driveway and fell, shattering my left elbow. As I lay there, the pain from the slightest movement of my arm was unlike any I'd ever experienced; I somehow made my way into my house to retrieve my phone and call a neighbor for help. She scooped up a few essentials and took me to the emergency room.

The injury was a very messy fracture and landed me in the hospital for four days. Between waves of unbelievable pain my mind struggled to come to grips with how to deal with my new situation – mainly a demanding job which included a press conference in the coming week. My confusion was compounded by the inexplicable pain-control protocol: 'Sorry, we have to wait until Dr. so-and-so gives us orders for your pain meds, but we've left him a message. . .'

Although I felt relatively helpless in the hospital bed, I recall feeling incredibly empowered to know that Dr. Hassell was overseeing my care. That unbelievable pain I mentioned? Dr. Hassell's RNs called me regularly when I was home following surgery and came up with strategies to improve pain control so I could sleep. (We found that I have a poor response to narcotics, and that Tylenol and ice were far more helpful for pain

management.) Knowing his team was thinking of me and checking in meant a lot — especially when I was feeling too overwhelmed to reach out.

During my days in the hospital and the months that followed, I found that the things I had been doing over the years to take care of myself had been worth every bit of the effort. I was in pretty good health when I fell, having been mentored on diet and lifestyle over the years by Dr. Hassell and his book *Good Food, Great Medicine*. The fact that I had great bone density, was at a good weight, and ate a whole food Mediterranean diet most of the time helped me heal faster.

In our family, emergencies always seem to take place during off hours. My fall happened on a Saturday, and Dr. Hassell was in touch throughout the weekend as well as the days that followed. When I experienced post-op complications, I was whisked back into his office, and he kept in close touch with my surgeon.

It's easy to take our health for granted, but 'life happens' when you least expect it, and it makes all the difference to have a great doctor. Thanks, Miles!"

Getting the best care from your doctor

Because no one knows what lies around the corner, it's a good idea to be prepared for the unexpected – a concept vividly illustrated by Susan's experience. Long-term health outcomes can have a great deal to do with the guidance we receive from our PCPs (primary care physicians). Although my practice is mainly primary care, we also see many other patients who come for second opinions, review of diagnostic approaches, and therapeutic alternatives. It is from those patients that we are hearing more and more about increasing fragmentation within primary care. Here are some health care considerations, including ways you can help your doctor do a better job for you.

Assume nothing! Nobody has as much at stake as you do. Don't assume your health care team is doing everything right: all of us make mistakes and allow things to fall through the cracks. Ask for solid answers (which can include a frank "I don't know"), and get copies of all of your test results.

Know your diagnosis, and be familiar with the tests that are being done to confirm the diagnosis, as well as the next steps to take if you don't get better; ask if other tests should be considered. If things aren't going well, ask your PCP about a second opinion.

Access to your own PCP is especially important when you're sick! Urgent care should be a rare last resort.

When your PCP arranges follow up appointments with specialists, he or she should be involved each step of the way: stay in touch with your PCP after seeing the specialist, and get (and give) feedback.

Know and discuss the alternatives for your care. Most problems have a range of diagnostic tools, treatment options, and opportunities for second opinions or specialty referrals. A useful tool to help patients review their options is UpToDate.com/patients. If treatments are recommended, including antibiotics, make sure you understand how much benefit can be expected, what is likely to happen if you do nothing, and what natural medicine approaches are reasonable to try.

The best health care includes self care

We humans are generally into symbolism, and the beginning of the year is a popular time to resolve to take better care of ourselves. This naturally creates tension with another characteristic of humans, which is a strong affinity for refined carbohydrates. (Think of some food you love but know you shouldn't indulge in: it's probably a refined carbohydrate.) As almost anyone can tell you, *starting* to eat better or exercise more is relatively easy; the trick is to *stay* on the wagon. It seems to work best to see it as a brand new way of life, not a diet or a program. It also helps to be convinced of the benefit; if you feel you can use a good dose of encouragement to kick-start lifestyle change, sign up for the *Good Food, Great Medicine* 2-part class series on March 6th and 13th. (See further on for details.)

Roasted Umami Almonds

(From page 162 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 4th edition)
Umami (oo-MAH-mee) is a Japanese term loosely translated as "deliciously savory." This recipe justifies our stern warning about the seductive quality of roasted nuts (page 42). Don't say you weren't told.

(Makes 3 cups)

3 cups (1 pound) raw almonds with skins
2 tablespoons soy sauce

Preheat oven to 250 degrees.

1. Spread almonds in a single layer in a rimmed baking sheet. (Line pan with parchment to make it easy to transfer nuts later.) Place in oven for 15 minutes.
2. Transfer hot nuts to a mixing bowl, toss with soy sauce, and set aside 10 minutes, tossing a few times to coat evenly.
3. Return almonds to baking pan and roast for about 1½ hours. Cool, transfer to tightly sealed container, and hide until ready to serve.

Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part class

These classes target weight loss, diabetes reversal, and inflammation, and are based on the new 4th edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, which each participant will receive at the first class.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 1):

- Review interrelationship of excess waistline and weight, insulin resistance (common to most cases of type 2 diabetes), and common chronic diseases.
- Discuss the role of the "key four" – a whole food Mediterranean diet; minimal sweeteners, refined grains and starches; daily activity; and enough sleep.
- Work through the 14 simple steps that target your risk factors and produce effective, lasting changes to your waistline, blood sugar, and other health risks.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 2):

- Explore practical applications of whole food choices and menu planning. See demos of foundational recipes from *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Review progress, find solutions to challenges, and fine-tune personal plans.

Time:	6 – 8 pm Wednesday
Dates:	3/6/2019 (Part 1) and 3/13/2019 (Part 2)
Location:	Providence St. Vincent Medical Center
Cost:	\$100 (2-class series)
Registration:	Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a place

Dr. Hassell's speaking events

1/25/2019 Valley Catholic Teacher In-service: *Food and Lifestyle Choices: The Intersection of Mental Health, Behavior, and Long-term Health.* Beaverton, OR.

1/30/2019 Providence Portland Medical Center Internal Medicine Grand Rounds: *Brain Health and Lifestyle: Which Choices Really Matter?* Portland, OR.

2/21/2019 Bay Area Hospital Grand Rounds: *Good Food is Great Medicine: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* Coos Bay, OR.

2/26/2019 University Club: *Brain Health and Lifestyle: What Choices Really Matter?* Members only. Portland, OR.

3/6/2019 and 3/13/2019 – Good Food, Great Medicine TYPE 2 DIABETES REVERSAL and SUSTAINABLE WEIGHT LOSS 2-PART LIFESTYLE CHANGE CLASS SERIES: Portland, OR. Call our office at 503.291.1777 to register.

4/4/2019 – 4/25/2019 Providence Heart Institute BASECAMP Cardiac Prevention + Wellness 4-part Series: *Good Food, Great Medicine:* Portland, OR. Call the Providence Resource Line at 503.574.6595 to register or find *Good Food, Great Medicine* in the class catalog at providence.org/classes.

Sign up for this free monthly medical + lifestyle newsletter at Goodfoodgreatmedicine.com

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)

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