NOT ALL LABWORK IS CREATED EQUAL
Looking under the hood at a few essential building blocks can significantly increase your health and decrease your costs of care

By Sam Pappas, M.D.

Health is not straightforward. Our body is more than just the sum of its parts; it is a complex system with interdependent structures and function. Unravelling these layers takes an advanced blueprint with the doctor and patient in the center of a meaningful and proactive partnership. One essential tool in assessing how healthy one is and how best to achieve optimal function, is to obtain comprehensive laboratory studies or blood work. One needs to look deeper than the eye can see. Even if one feels well, it is imperative to act and measure biomarkers that often predate the onset of an illness. I often like to draw my patients’ attention to this point by quoting President Reagan in dealing with the Russians, “we need to trust but verify.”

Unfortunately, most annual medical check-ups or physicals involve the physician ordering only routine blood tests, if any are ordered at all. Too often, there is a misconception by doctors that labs add little value and should be reserved for those who are sick. Such a simplistic and outdated view can often leave the patient in a lurch as they realize that they may not be feeling well or desire a more proactive approach to address potential future problems.

A great place to begin is by looking at the most prevalent, under-diagnosed, and clinically-relevant nutritional deficiencies: omega-3 fats, vitamin D3, B vitamins (especially B-12 and folate), magnesium, and zinc. These essential nutrients are critical to everyday function. For example, low folate and B-12 are associated with problems in brain function and mood. Omega-3 fats and magnesium play important roles in improving metabolism and supporting heart health. The role of vitamin D3 and zinc in a variety of key functions such as bone health and immune system function is now well recognized.
The nutritionist Jonny Bowden has correctly pointed to an important health roadmap by referring to the four horsemen of aging as glucose control, inflammation, oxidation, and stress; all of which can be measured. Glucose control and inflammation are particularly dangerous in their destructive force as they are associated with increased rates of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, and neurodegenerative disorders like dementia. They are easily measured with a hemoglobin A1C test, which correlates to a mean or average three-month glucose level and a high sensitivity or cardio CRP test, which measures systemic inflammation or an overactive immune system.

Regular lab testing is a simple yet powerful strategy to help one proactively take charge of their current and future health and wellness. A well-chosen profile of blood tests that can easily be drawn at common lab companies such as Quest and Lab Corp, may be covered by insurance, and can thoroughly assess one’s overall state of health. Furthermore, increasing studies are showing that such labs can detect silent warning signals that predate the development of serious illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease. Armed with this vital knowledge, you can plan and execute a proactive strategy to help you achieve and maintain good health and optimal function.

Join us December 8th to learn more about measuring what’s under your hood.

SAVE THE DATE:
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 6:30 – 7:30 PM
*LIVING UNDER THE HOOD* HEALTH TALK
WITH DR. SAM PAPPAS

Why come? Learn about an essential tool to assess one’s level of health and function

What will you leave with? Better understanding of the most important labs and how to order them

Health is wealth: Peace of mind comes with knowing you have a plan for how to look for warning signs of disease before symptoms develop