

## PEOPLE

# Carson B. Burgstiner, MD

## The legacy of a healer

By Timothy Daiss

**D**r. Burgstiner didn't know why he felt this way: sore joints, fatigue and flu-like symptoms. But it became suddenly, painfully clear something was wrong. He had a hunch, and it proved true. He had Hepatitis B, a highly contagious and life-threatening disease contracted in an operation with an infected patient. To compound matters, this would spell the end of his medical career, a career that had spanned nearly three decades.

He could continue examining patients, but was prohibited from performing surgery or helping bring new life into the world, both a source of joy and personal satisfaction. It appeared that Savannah had lost a gifted physician in his prime.

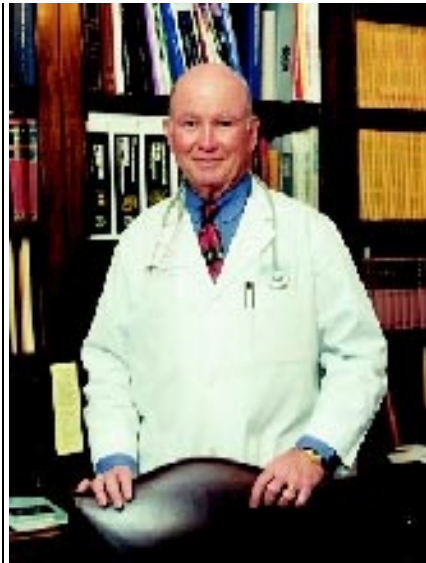
Seven years elapsed, and Dr. Burgstiner was still a carrier of the hepatitis virus, but, as often is the case with great men, he would turn tragedy into triumph. He went back to the basics, consulted his medical school books, and searched for answers.

Finally, a principle, long forgotten, sprang to life. Dr. Burgstiner reflected upon that time, "I recalled that I was taught in medical school that the thymus gland controls the immune system. It is large in children and decreases as we age". He reasoned, if the thymus gland could be reactivated, it may be able to boost the immune system and deal with the hepatitis that plagued him.

Armed with this knowledge, Dr. Burgstiner visited a health food store and bought a preparation made of calf thymus. To the thymus he added a vitamin-mineral complex, digestive enzymes, and several herbs known for liver and immune support. He began to ingest the formula daily. Simply put, it worked. In six weeks his hepatitis had converted to what is described as a "non-carrier state".

Elated with his personal breakthrough, as well as the ramifications for the medical world, Burgstiner contacted the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta and reported his findings. Blood samples were sent to Massachusetts General at Harvard as well as Scripps Institute in California. Countless studies were performed on the samples, including DNA testing and liver enzyme levels. The test results were encouraging, his hypothesis confirmed.

Dr. Burgstiner took the next step. He consulted with other physicians and researchers, most of whom responded with great interest and enthusiasm. Dr. Julian Whitaker, America's foremost physician advocate of natural healing, talk show host, and author of the nationally circulated newsletter *Health and Healing* remarked, "The ability to maintain high



Dr. Burgstiner

levels of thymus hormone activity has enormous potential for alleviating suffering from age-related diseases." Dr. Burgstiner stated, "With this confirmation from my colleagues and with the knowledge that the government would not support studies on these products because they are food supplements, I began to recommend the thymus, vitamin-mineral supplements to my patients."

In a short period, many of his patients reported marked improvements. In a span of only three years, Dr. Burgstiner had arrested 84 cases of hepatitis B, 34 cases of hepatitis C, and 28 cases of rheumatoid arthritis, as well as 12 cases of lupus, 10 cases of multiple sclerosis, 7 cases of squamous cell cancer of the skin, and several cases of atopic dermatitis.

No small feat, for a simple yet overlooked fact: reactivation of the thymus gland boosts the body's immune system. The next step in Dr. Burgstiner's journey was a report in the January 1991 *Journal of the Medical Association of Georgia* which published his findings. Soon physicians across the country took note. Burgstiner stated, "The results of this article [were] overwhelming. We received thousands of letters and calls from MDs throughout the country." This simple yet amazing breakthrough continued to gain momentum, in spite of naysayers and

disregard by the established medical community. An Atlanta television station, hearing about a "small town" doctor and some sort of perceived medical breakthrough, sent their medical correspondent, Dr. Michael Rosen, MD to Savannah to investigate what Dr. Rosen presumed to be "quackery."

Instead, Dr. Rosen filmed a multi-part report praising Dr. Burgstiner's findings. This time news spread quickly, and the Atlanta station was inundated with calls from across the globe. Once more the determination of this medical pioneer was changing history. Yet, formal "double blind" studies needed to be conducted before the FDA or the medical community would give credence.

Though highly respected as a surgeon and OBGYN, many of his colleagues thought that Dr. Burgstiner had crossed the line of medical orthodoxy and entered into "alternative" medicine. In fact, the medical establishment cautions that herbal remedies pose unknown dangers due to lower regulation as well as lack of patient supervision and direction.

Many also disagree with Dr. Burgstiner's thymus hypothesis. Thomas Boyer, MD, professor of immunology at Emory University stated, "My guess is that the thymus gland shrinks for a good reason-it is no longer needed."

Yet, Dr. Burgstiner saw his breakthrough as anything but alternative. Instead, he believed that sound nutritional support was integral to wellness and sound health.

Dr. Burgstiner continued using thymic formulations in his practice. Eventually he developed a comprehensive wellness formula that bears his name. Thousands began to benefit from the use of his formula and anecdotal evidence continued to mount. Reports of the hepatitis virus being arrested were cited as were positive reports in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, allergy problems and chronic fatigue syndrome.

This was big news, and people took notice. Several celebrities tried and benefited from Dr. Burgstiner's formula.

Country singer Naomi Judd, diagnosed with hepatitis, consulted with the doctor about his thymic research during her recovery. Former baseball star, Brett Butler, diagnosed with throat cancer in 1995, also used his formula and discusses in his book, *Field of Hope*, its role in his recovery.

It was Dr. Burgstiner's desire that double blind studies be conducted to prove his theories, to confirm the anecdotal evidence. Unfortunately, he died in 1997, partly due to liver damage suffered during the seven years before re-activation of his thymus gland. He did not see his wish of double blind studies come

to fruition.

The torch was passed to his son, John Burgstiner, who took the helm of the nutrition company that Dr. Burgstiner founded. Hoping to validate his father's claims, John began pursuing the evidence so long hoped for. "I thank God every day for using my father in such a powerful way, and it is my passion to fulfill his legacy," John said.

### FDA PROTOCOL APPROVED

Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., recently approved an FDA protocol for a double blind/placebo controlled study on chronic fatigue syndrome using Dr. Burgstiner's formula. The study will begin with the enrolling of patients next summer.

In addition, another double blind study using Dr. Burgstiner's formula is being prepared by the Anti-Aging and Life Enhancement Institute, an affiliate of Savannah Plastic Surgery Associates at Memorial Medical Center.

Dr. Arcie Mizell, a naturopathic practitioner and medical research director at the institute, is hopeful. He stated, "Dr. Burgstiner's formula appears to be just as beneficial as homeopathic growth hormone which is used to stimulate the body's production of growth hormones and slows the aging process."

He continued, "As we age, growth hormones are depleted, and our physical functions are diminished. Ailments such as heart diseases, thyroid diseases, and joint disease become prevalent."

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"If the study proves Dr. Burgstiner's hypothesis," Mizell stated, "it would potentially save billions of dollars by delaying the length of time that new populations of elderly would enter long-term care facilities."

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Eric Scheinbart, a board certified physician in anti-aging medicine affiliated with Memorial Health University Medical Center, validates the importance of the thymus gland in maintaining good health and delaying the aging process. He said, "Reactivation of the thymus gland increases cell longevity, thereby diminishing the decline of immune function."

Yet, according to Barry Schlafstein, MD, a young physician and surgeon that worked closely with Dr. Burgstiner the last year of his practice, Dr. Burgstiner's legacy was not limited to his medical research. Schlafstein said, "Every young physician should have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a physician like Bucky Burgstiner. Not only did he have outstanding gynecological and surgical skills, he related to patients in a unique way; he genuinely cared about each and every patient."

When asked what kind of legacy Dr. Burgstiner left, Schlafstein remarked, "He was a medical genius. It was his superior knowledge and grasp of human physiology and anatomy that allowed him to be more aggressive, to move into new areas of research."

While waiting for the results of the double blind studies, Dr. Burgstiner's research continues to help, continues to heal, and increasing numbers of physicians validate his claims.

With the increasing awareness in alternative medicine, it is inevitable that the established medical community will take note, adhere, and join the fold.

In this regard, a medical maverick like Dr. Burgstiner, years ahead of his time, becomes a pioneer, a founder and an innovator whose work far exceeds his life.