

# A Consumer's Guide To Choosing A Functional Medicine Practice

**How to avoid costly mistakes,  
choose the right practice and  
experience vibrant health**



Written by Alexandria Crowe NP, CFMP  
Adapted from Dr. Sachin Patel

## Read this guide and you will discover:

1. How to spot 3 functional medicine practice red flags
2. 6 costly misconceptions about functional medicine
3. Which approach to functional medicine works best
4. 5 painful mistakes to avoid when choosing a practice
5. The importance of value and price
6. Why you deserve abundant health
7. A 100% no-pressure guarantee
8. 4 steps to better energy, health, and vitality



## Message From Alex Crowe

Dear Health Seeker,

Choosing a functional medicine practitioner isn't easy.

Why? Because you are constantly bombarded with misleading advertising, confusing claims, and outdated information.

From super low prices, high-pressure sales, unqualified practitioners, and near worthless methods - How will you ever find a qualified, competent, professional functional medicine practitioner?

You can start by reading this consumer's guide. In fact, in this booklet you will discover how to spot 3 red flags when searching for a practice, 5 costly mistakes when choosing a functional medicine practitioner, and 4 steps to better energy, health, and vitality.

I wrote this guide to help you better understand functional medicine. Now, with this information you can make an informed and intelligent decision when finding a practitioner locally.

If you have any questions about functional medicine, you are invited to email the office. I have dedicated my business to educate consumers and I will be happy to help you in any way.

Cordially,

Alex Crowe, RN(EC),BScN, MN, NP, CFMP  
Rowan Health and Wellness Clinic



## How to spot 3 functional medicine practice red flags

### **RED FLAG #1: UNBELIEVABLY LOW PRICE.**

To some degree, all of us are attracted to a low price because we want to work within a budget. But some functional medicine practitioners use price as the bait for their false and misleading advertising. They offer a cheap initial consultation – usually FREE – and then, once you're in the office, they pressure you into buying an expensive, one-size-fits-all program. Functional medicine is not as cheap as some practices would like you to believe. Many practices are notorious for up-charging the costs of lab tests to recover their costs of offering free appointments. In the end, this makes testing more expensive for patients and may influence the practitioner's choice of test. Work with a practice that has full transparency about their pricing for both services and lab testing.

### **RED FLAG #2: UNSUPPORTED CLAIMS. "THIS METHOD IS THE BEST."**

You'll read this in almost every practice ad and hear this from virtually every practitioner's office. Remember this: the method that's best for you is the method that achieves your goal. So before you choose a functional medicine practice, identify your objectives. Then select the practice that you feel helps you reach those objectives.

### **RED FLAG #3: TREATMENT WITHOUT TESTING AND TRACKING**

Many practitioners who claim they are practicing functional medicine are in fact simply practicing "green medicine". They are just treating the effect of a much deeper problem with supplements or alternative medications instead of identifying the ROOT CAUSES. This leads to expensive, on-going supplementation. It is also important to note that the cost of not addressing the underlying causes leads to further degeneration of a person's health and an ever-increasing list of supplements to take. A skilled practitioner will use supplements only after testing a patient's needs and will also be attempting to address the underlying cause of their health challenge. Testing is the only way to identify clinical blind spots and monitor patient progress. Treating the symptoms should only be used to buy you time as you work to uncover the causes. In fact, one would argue that treating the disease goes against the core principles of functional medicine. A key test that every functional medicine practitioner uses is a comprehensive stool test. If your practitioner isn't running this test on virtually every patient, they are not practicing functional medicine.

## Which approach to functional medicine works best?

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to functional medicine, some approaches are more logical than others. Choose a practice that provides functional lab testing, high quality nutraceuticals, and most importantly work with a practitioner that assesses and addresses your health from different vantage points. A functional medicine approach should include a thorough assessment of the following pillars:

**Mitochondria:** Mitochondria are found in virtually every cell in your body. These organelles are responsible for producing ATP. Carbohydrates, fats, and proteins are converted into energy via the mitochondria. Since energy cannot be created or destroyed, it must be converted into a usable form for the cell to use. When your cells have healthy mitochondria, they can carry out their cell function.

**Detoxification and Oxidation:** Unfortunately, we live in a very, very toxic times. Our liver is meant to detoxify our body, not our environment. The liver is the largest internal organ and serves over 800 different functions in human physiology. It is highly critical to assess for an individual's detoxification capacity and oxidative stress for best outcomes.

**Brain Health, Neurotransmitters, and Methylation:** A healthy brain makes healthy choices. Inflammation, chronic stress, poor digestive function, sleepless nights, and poor nutrient status lead to brain based imbalances. A good practitioner recognizes the importance and decision making capability of a healthy brain and pays special attention to address it.

**Diet and Digestion:** Most people are quite aware that what you eat is very important but most people do not realize the importance of healthy digestive function. Even a healthy meal, if undigested, creates a toxic burden on your system. A functional medicine approach will always include a thorough assessment of both diet and digestive function. This type of testing is typically done through stool analysis, urine, or breath testing.

**Stress, Hormones, and Inflammation:** Today, our society is plagued with chronic stress, inflammation, and hormonal imbalances. This disrupts our bodies communication system and leads to many chronic health issues. It is critical for patients to learn appropriate stress management techniques, minimize inflammatory behaviours, and restore hormonal imbalances through lifestyle, instead pills and potions.

**Lifestyle and Environment:** Our health is simply a reflection of our lifestyle and our environment. It is often imbalances in lifestyle and environment that lead to chronic health issues. A good functional medicine program will provide patients with the appropriate tools, coaching, and awareness to ensure that lifestyle and environment are working for the patient, not against them.

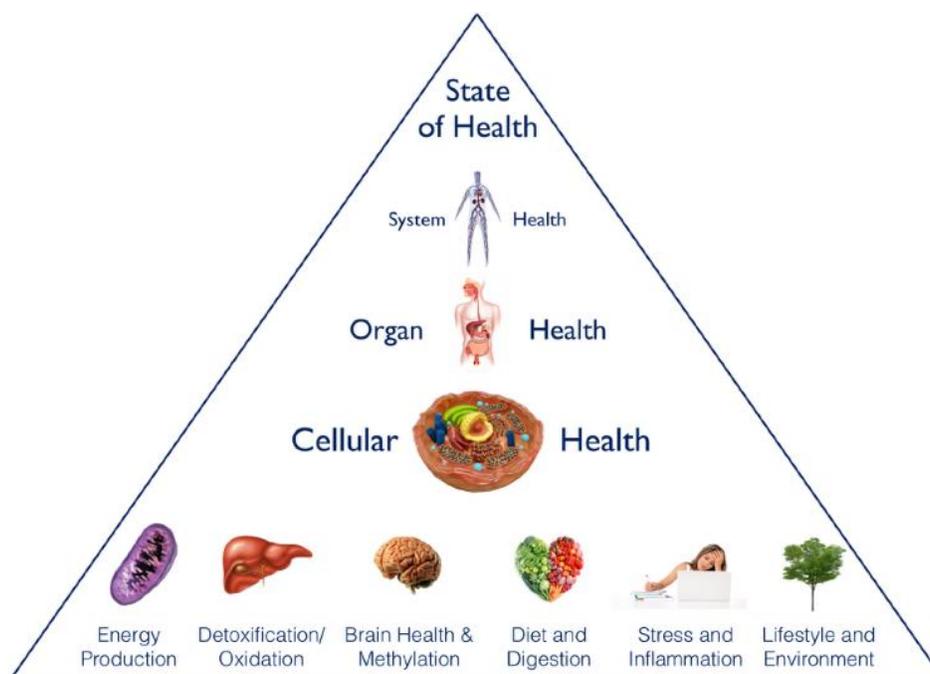
## An effective approach to functional medicine

Your cells are the smallest unit of life in your body. Cells have incredibly complex functions to carry out. Cells in the body are constantly dying and replacing themselves. This provides an incredible opportunity to heal and repair. All diseases result from compromised cell function.

A collection of cells makes up an organ or a gland (liver, pancreas, brain, heart, etc). Organs make up systems (nervous system, endocrine system, cardiovascular system, etc). The state of your cellular health is what determines the health of your organs, the health of your organs determines the health of your systems, and the health of your systems determines your state of health.

Approaching your health from a cellular standpoint can only result in systemic improvements. This means that the health of every system in your body improves. Although cells carry out unique functions, they all function essentially the same way. This makes cellular health the most logical approach to your health and wellness.

## The Pillars of Health



## 6 COSTLY misconceptions when choosing a functional medicine practitioner

**MISCONCEPTION #1:** You should wait as long as possible before making an appointment

No. Your health is your most important asset. Your body is fighting hard for you on daily basis to allow you to function normally. Chronic disease places a huge burden on your body's systems (digestive, immune, cardiovascular, neurological, etc). The longer you wait the more damage may occur and can further delay the healing process.

**MISCONCEPTION #2:** The only reason to see a functional medicine doctor is to treat the symptoms you are dealing with

No. Symptoms are usually one of the last things to present during the progression of chronic diseases. For many years your body has been fighting hard to allow you to function symptom-free. Patients who only seek symptomatic relief experience a chronic recurrence of their chief complaint and ongoing costs associated with symptom management. The purpose of seeing a functional medicine practitioner is to find some immediate symptomatic relief, identify key contributors to your current health challenge, and also work towards addressing the underlying causes of chronic disease.

**MISCONCEPTION #3:** One method of functional medicine is as good as another

No. Functional medicine requires many years of training and continuous, ongoing education to stay abreast of the immense amount of information that is available to practitioners. When searching for a good functional medicine practitioner it is important to ask what certifications the practitioner has, what associations and educational platforms the practitioner utilizes, and it is also important to discuss how comfortable the practitioner is in laboratory interpretation. You may find that the same lab result is interpreted differently and more comprehensively by an experienced practitioner.

**MISCONCEPTION #4:** Having the right lab testing and supplements is all a practitioner needs to get me better

No. Virtually every single practitioner that you meet has accessibility to the same supplements and laboratory analysis. It is very important to discuss with the practitioner why they use specific lab tests and specific supplement companies. Having access to the right supplements and laboratory testing does not ensure adequate clinical outcomes. A good practitioner relies on the things that they can measure, and more importantly, the things that

they can't measure. A very important component to clinical outcomes is taking a thorough history and using clinical experience to determine the fastest road to recovery.

**MISCONCEPTION #5:** The practice that offers the lowest price or the one covered by your insurance is the one that you should hire

No. I've seen so many patients that gravitate towards seeing the practitioner that offers the lowest price or is covered under their insurance plan. The two most common problems with this approach are:

1. The price that you are paying may not include all the services that are required to get you better.
2. The price that you see advertised may not be the price that you pay because of additional hidden costs.

Working with the right functional medicine practice in the long run will save you both time and money. In fact, we would argue that finding the right functional medicine practitioner will make you money and buy you additional time with your family and loved ones.

**MISCONCEPTION # 6:** Honest functional medicine practices should be able to give you an exact price quote over the telephone

We wish this was true, but it is simply impossible.

Honest, reputable functional medicine practitioners develop unique treatment plans for each of their patients. This is one of the underlying principles of functional medicine. A functional medicine practice would only be able to provide you with a fairly accurate estimate after thoroughly evaluating your case. Most people want to hear that their issues are going to be a cheap, quick, and easy fix. While they would love to give a quote over the phone, there is no way for anyone to know what testing, supplements, modalities, and strategy are best suited for your specific needs without assessing your complete medical history



## 5 Mistakes when choosing a functional medicine practice

### **Mistake #1: Choosing a functional medicine program that does not do functional lab testing**

There is no question that lab testing and high quality supplementation are extremely important in providing outstanding outcomes. With the right testing and the right supplements, a skilled practitioner is able to produce much better results. A good way to know if a practitioner is skilled in laboratory interpretation and supplement implementation is by asking about the practitioner's experience and training with each one, because even the best tools fail when in the wrong hands. Ask them how many functional lab reports they have interpreted. Hopefully you are not one of the first few.

### **Mistake #2: Choosing a functional medicine practitioner based on low price**

Low price can be a problem in 4 ways:

1. Low price can be the bait that attracts your phone call, but once the provider gets you in their office they might provide a much higher price.
2. Low price may only provide a limited spectrum of the services that are required in order to help you receive the best outcomes with your care.
3. Low price usually indicates the level of value the practitioner places on their time, training, and services offered.
4. Who really wants to see the cheapest doctor? Most people brag that their doctor is the best, not the cheapest. You are not shopping for a blouse on the clearance rack, this is your health we are talking about.

### **Mistake #3: Choosing a functional medicine practice based on a single telephone call**

Instead, schedule a no obligation visit with the practitioner (in person) and share your personal story. Then you will know exactly what the doctor recommends. Expect to pay for an initial consultation, doctors that value their time, also value yours. Some practitioners may offer a free introductory phone call to address any questions you might have before you make an in-person appointment. This is a good sign that the practice is not interested in wasting your valuable time and money.



#### **Mistake #4: Choosing a functional medicine practitioner without reviewing testimonials**

Any functional medicine practitioner can say anything about his/her past success. Make sure you read testimonials from current or past customers of the functional medicine practice. Social proof from [Facebook](#) and Google reviews can be good places to look as well.

#### **Mistake #5: Choosing a functional medicine practitioner that is not certified**

It is important to choose a functional medicine practitioner that is trained and certified. The Institute of Functional Medicine as well as Functional Medicine University are two organizations that offer training in functional medicine. It is important to note the level of training and experience of your practitioner. A good question to ask your practitioner is how many hours of additional training they engage in on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis and how many patients have you actually worked with. It also important to pay very special attention whether the practitioner is even living their message. You should always work with a team of people that inspire you to live your best life and are shining examples of their own work!

## The importance of value and price

**Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.**

When you select a functional medicine practitioner, you can choose from a wide variety of messages and prices. A seasoned functional medicine practitioner will be able to use his or her clinical experience to deliver a far superior and far more cost efficient vehicle to achieving your health goals. A good functional medicine program will provide value well beyond the program itself. In fact, a well administered functional medicine approach will yield a lifetime of benefit. This is why addressing the root cause may cost more initially but continues to deliver value and savings over your lifetime.

The Institute of Functional Medicine, the world's largest functional medicine accrediting body, highly recommends seeking a trained and experienced practitioner that meets your needs.

We highly suggest engaging in a program that offers live workshops, email access to your clinician, online patient education, patient resources, video lab summaries etc. The more tools you have, the more likely you are to succeed.

## Why you deserve a clean bill of health and vitality

Health is not for sale, if it were, no one would be able to afford it.

Your health is your wealth, period. Because health is your greatest asset it is important that you make a highly informed and educated decision regarding who you trust.

Each functional medicine practitioner and method has advantages and disadvantages. Some methods may be very effective at treating the symptoms with natural agents, while others will dig deeper. What are you looking for?

Working with a functional medicine practitioner should go far beyond lab testing and supplementation. A highly effective approach to your health includes interventions such as lifestyle, mindset, relaxation techniques, environmental assessment, patient education, and most importantly client support.

If all you want is the cheapest practitioner possible, I respectfully ask that you re-assess your position, we are talking about your health here!

If you want great health, if you want to protect and invest in your future, if you want to ensure the health of those you love, work with a practitioner that you can trust.

Functional medicine is a highly personalized approach to your health. It may be a little bit more pricey (strictly from a cost standpoint), but is unmatched in its value. Since a good functional medicine outcome is based on results, spare no expenses when it comes to your health. A good practitioner should be able deliver tremendous value to you if they are able to do their job correctly, without cutting any corners.

## **100% NO PRESSURE GUARANTEE**

A functional medicine practitioner should want you to be super pleased - in fact, absolutely delighted. So every new patient consultation should come with a 100% no pressure guarantee. What does this mean? Simply this, if you are not convinced that the practice offers the best value in healthcare, simply part ways, no hard feelings. Not every patient and practitioner are going to connect with each other. A mature practitioner recognizes the value of a strong doctor/patient relationship, a relationship built on mutual trust and respect.



## The 4 steps to better health, energy, and the vitality

If you're thinking about seeking the help of a functional medicine practitioner, we encourage you to follow these four steps:

**Step #1:** Make a commitment to yourself to prioritize your health. The longer you struggle with your health, the more difficult and expensive your recovery will be. Plus, the longer you wait, the more you and those around you will suffer.

**Step #2:** List your objectives. Do you just want to feel better? Or do you want to really get to the root causes of your health issue and address them? Do you want to work with an honest, reputable practice - or are you willing to risk working with the company that offers the lowest price?

**Step #3:** Ask questions. The way you learn more about any company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are 5 good questions to ask a functional medicine practitioner before you begin your journey together.

1. What is your definition of health?
2. What type of laboratory testing do you perform?
3. How will you know if my health is improving?
4. What accreditations do you have?
5. How many hours of continuing education per year do you take?

**Step #4:** Once you are satisfied that you are working with an honest, competent professional, call their office to schedule a no obligation appointment. Do not expect this appointment to be free. The only way a practitioner will ever value your time, is if they value their time first.

By following these four steps, take in all the information you need to make an informed, intelligent decision. If you want a quick, cheap approach to your health, there are many practices in the phone book that you can call or you can try to figure this all out yourself. If you want your health to thrive by getting to the root cause of your health issues and are willing to put in the work that's required - then spend the time to find the right practice.

As a consumer focused organization, The Rowan Health and Wellness Clinic I am happy to answer your questions and help you find the right doctor. To reach us email [info@rowanhealth.ca](mailto:info@rowanhealth.ca) or visit [www.rowanhealthandwellness.com](http://www.rowanhealthandwellness.com) to set up a free 15 minute Discovery Call to answer the questions you may have.

## About Alex Crowe, BScN, MN, NP, CFMP

The Founder of the Rowan Health and Wellness Clinic

Alex is a licensed Nurse Practitioner, Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner and Health Coach. Her journey to Functional Medicine began when she was searching for a better answer for her client's complex health needs and also her own health struggles.

Once learning about Functional Medicine it has become a passionate truth and lifestyle for Alex. The approach of empowering one's health by identifying the root cause that sometimes is not obvious at first. She recognizes that the body cannot be divided into systems when caring for complex health conditions such as autoimmune disease or metabolic syndrome, but rather look at how one imbalance affects everything, and the longer it remains unbalanced the more likely another area of the body will soon start to be impacted and unbalanced.



Alex is now on a mission to help as many people as she can to overcome their own health burdens and conditions and transform their lives. The discovery of the power of Functional Medicine helped her when struggling with her own health issues when there were no answers in traditional places.

## About The Rowan Health and Wellness Clinic

The Rowan Health and Wellness Clinic is dedicated to helping people empower their lives through improving their health using the Functional Medicine approach. Functional Medicine is an evolution in the practice of medicine that better addresses the healthcare needs of the 21st century by shifting the traditional disease-centered focus of medical practice to a more health centered approach, addressing the whole person, not just a set of symptoms. We do this by mentoring patients on lifestyle, and by always addressing the root cause.

We search for the root cause of what is driving your disease or symptoms and work with you to create a plan for health to meet your unique needs. We commit to providing the highest level of service, integrity, and honesty to those that trust us with their health.

To find out more about the clinic and the programs and services at [www.rowanhealthandwellness.com](http://www.rowanhealthandwellness.com)

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