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**AUTHORITY MAGAZINE**

## Dr Elroy Vojdani On The 5 Things You Need To Create A Highly Successful Career In The Health and Wellness Industry

Luke Kervin | December 29, 2021



*The global health and wellness market is worth more than [1.5 trillion dollars](#). So many people are looking to improve their physical, mental, and emotional wellness. At the same time, so many people are needed to help provide these services. What does it take to create a highly successful career in the health and wellness industry?*

*In this interview series called “5 Things You Need To Create A Highly Successful Career In The Health and Wellness Industry” we are talking to health and wellness professionals who can share insights and stories from their experiences. In this particular interview, we had the distinct pleasure of interviewing **Elroy Vojdani, MD, IFMCP.***

*As a pioneer in functional medicine and founder of Regenera Medical in Los Angeles, Calif., [Dr. Elroy Vojdani](#), has quickly become the go-to expert for media and C-Suite executives alike. Warmly referred to as Dr. V, he is a licensed medical doctor and an Institute for Functional Medicine Certified Practitioner (IFMCP). A well-published physician, Dr. V is most known for accurately diagnosing and treating serious, life-threatening conditions by getting to the root of his patient’s health concerns. In addition to his extensive research on the causes of Alzheimer’s along with the risk assessment blood test he developed for the disease, he is the author of [When Food Bites Back](#). His expertise has been featured on such media as “Home & Family,” Fox Los Angeles ELLE Magazine, Yahoo!, MSN, Forbes.com, Parade Magazine, Shape Magazine, Reader’s Digest, Healthline, VICE, Well +Good, Real Simple and Bustle.*



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**Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Before we dive in, our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your ‘backstory’ and how you grew up?**

I grew up in Los Angeles, California. My father is an immunologist and Associate Professor, previously at UCLA, and now at Loma Linda University. His work and passion are in the world of autoimmune disease, and he’s dedicated his career and life to assisting with the identification of autoimmune diseases. Also, he’s spent time in identifying the environmental contributors to an autoimmune disease to try to broaden the picture of how someone can avoid that disease as an outcome and if the disease is present, how to improve its trajectory by looking at the big picture, including how lifestyle can improve clinical outcomes.

**Was there a particular person or event that inspired you to live a wellness-focused lifestyle? Can you tell us about your main motivation to go all in?**

My father, Dr. Aristo Vojdani, is my motivation. He really had an incredible passion for being proactive about health. From a very young age, I grew up aware of the dangers of some of the common environmental toxins like plastic and aluminum. I remember when I was around 10 years old, our household did things like not using nonstick cookware, using glass containers instead of plastic ones, avoiding the microwave, and minimizing our use of aluminum. Before Whole Foods existed, there was a local store here in Los Angeles called Mrs. Gooch’s which was eventually purchased by Whole Foods, but we would do all of our produce shopping over there, when organic produce was really first offered.

In many ways, my father has been a true pioneer and I learned a lot about healthy living and healthy lifestyles from him, as well as his colleagues from the early days of functional medicine. His guidance was meaningful to me and when I went to medical school, I began suffering from chronic sinus infections, brain fog, and irritable bowel syndrome about 20 years ago. At the time, my dad was developing food sensitivity testing, particularly for wheat (gluten) and dairy (casein) peptides. I told him what my issues were and he ran that test on me. He told me that I had gluten and dairy sensitivities, and this was something that was unheard of and not talked about back then. I followed his advice and removed gluten and dairy from my diet as a trial and I felt like a completely different person by doing this. I



didn't have sinus infections, I was thinking clearly, I slept better, and overall, my body felt better.

I was able to perform to my maximum in that very demanding time in medical school. I really credit him for being the inspiration and resource to be able to execute something like that.

**Most people with a wellbeing centered lifestyle have a “go-to” activity, exercise, beverage, or food that is part of their routine. What is yours and can you tell us how it helps you?**

There are two go-to things for me. One is my first calorie-consumption of the day, which is a smoothie I consume around 11:00am in the morning. For the smoothie, I mix vegan protein, almond milk, a handful of blueberries, usually a handful of greens, a little bit of almond butter, ice, whole flaxseeds and some cacao nibs together. This is the first opportunity to fuel myself after doing a time-restrictive feeding intermittent fasting episode from the night before. It really sets my tone, energy level and brain activity for the rest of the day.

The other thing that's a go-to for me is doing a nightly meditation before I go to sleep. I spend 10 minutes to a chakra-style meditation to focus on the different chakras that speak most to me. I also spend a few minutes doing mobility exercises that I learned from a YouTube channel called KneesOverToesGuy since I suffer from many orthopedic issues, which date all the way back to when I played high school football — broken bones, torn meniscus in both knees, rotator cuff issues, chronic neck arthritis. So, it's important for me to be proactive in maintaining my bodily function. These exercises have helped to keep my body balanced and joints as lubricated as possible so that I'm not impacted from my prior injuries.

**To live a wellness-focused life is one thing, but how did it become your career? How did it all start?**



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invasive surgeries which is different from what I learned with my father. I think that was part of my path — I needed to hone my own craft and prove to myself that I had my own gusto and power.

After I finished fellowship, I started a private practice here in Southern California with a wonderful group of other young doctors. I went all in on the hospital side of medicine and after a couple of years into it, I found myself depleted and honestly depressed. That style of medicine, which is all about trying to keep someone who's at the end of a really debilitating long, chronic disease course alive was a bit of a soul-crushing experience. You really don't do anything about the disease, or the suffering — you may really just be prolonging that — and for me, knowing as much as I knew about the world of immunology and disease prevention, I needed to feel like my energy and time was going into helping somebody hopefully avoid any of these sufferings.

Because of my research background, I decided to get retrained and certified with the Institute for Functional Medicine. I opened up my own clinic because I had a strong knowledge base in that world. It's been almost 5 years and it's been an incredible opportunity and very rewarding to help people prevent a debilitating disease become a part of their life.

**Can you share a story about the biggest challenges you faced when you were first starting? How did you resolve that? What are the main lessons or takeaways from that story?**

The biggest challenge when I first opened the clinic was bridging my traditional education from medical school, internship, residency and fellowship, into this wellness space. I think traditional, western training has its purpose and it's great for certain things like disease identification but, in my opinion, it doesn't do a great job in handling outside-of-the-box issues. Functional and integrative medicine is very much an out-of-the-box thinking style, so I needed to bridge those two things where an MD with real immunological research experience has an understanding as well as traditional training coming into this space to be a bridge between both sides.



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I think resolving it was tough because it took a lot of time, experience, and desire to be better at those things. Taking my ego out of the equation and communicating with other physicians was very important too.

**Can you share with us how the work you are doing is helping to make a bigger impact in the world? Can you share a story that illustrates that?**

I don't really think about how it's making a bigger impact in the world; I'm trying to make my impact on the person sitting in front of me. I think that every person who comes to my clinic, they see the power of being proactive about chronic health and it gives them a sense of empowerment to be in control of their health rather than being on a collision course. That empowerment is the most impactful part of this style of work, and when people see that empowerment, they start spreading the word about their experience. That's how this becomes a big grassroots effort to be better about chronic diseases in this country.

As the years go on, people keep on referring their friends and family. The desire for this continues to be growing in the community and it's really encouraging.

**What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now? How do you think that might help people?**

I recently published my first book, *When Food Bites Back*, and the idea is to provide a public education resource so that people can understand more about the immune system and how our food can impact the immune system, and ultimately how those two things can impact long-term health. I'm excited that the book is out. I spent a lot of time making sure it's a good point of resource and information for people starting their journey into understanding this side of medicine.

**You are a successful leader. Which three character traits do you think were most instrumental to your success? Can you please share a story or example for each?**



The three-character traits that are most instrumental to my success are perseverance, fearlessness, and happiness.

First and foremost is persistence because this style of medicine is investigative in nature. A lot of it is still new, there's no real road map and you have to use your basic scientific, medical, and human skills to blaze a path forward. Often times that involves hitting a road bump or a dead end. When those challenges arise, there's a temptation to give up but, with perseverance, I try very hard to push beyond that and challenge myself. In many instances the answer isn't immediately obvious and can appear three to six months later, but I continue pushing and digging until I find something that works.

Initially, I didn't have formal training with the work I do now and when you're doing something that's different, it can be really hard. I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't push through the fear barrier and continue to follow my intuition.

Happiness is instrumental, and having an internal satisfaction with the work that you're doing contributes to my success. I didn't know how successful this style of practice would be when I started, it just felt like the right thing for me to do for people. I first started by doing what was right for me and then the success followed.

**OK, thank you for all of that. Let's now shift to the main focus of our interview. Let's begin with a basic definition of terms so that all of us are on the same page. Wellness is an incredibly broad topic. How would you define the term "Wellness"? Can you explain what you mean?**

For me, wellness means preventative medicine, with a personalized, whole-body approach. For example, if a person walks through the door, you understand that there are unique things about them, they will have unique things that face them in the future and it's my job to identify all of those things. I also have to figure out what's the path is for them, individually, so that their health is optimized. It's a very complicated thing, but preventative and personalized, whole-body medicine is my definition of wellness.



**As an expert, this might be intuitive to you, but it will be instructive to expressly articulate this. Can you please share a few reasons with our readers about why focusing on our wellness should be a priority in our lives?**

Wellness should be a priority in our lives because if you look at the health trajectory our country was facing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were on a collision course with chronic inflammatory and autoimmune conditions making up most of the cause of death and mortality in this country. I look at wellness as the force pushing against that.

If we're conscious about the decisions that we make in our lives, we can avoid these things. It takes effort to be conscious about how you live your life and what you put in your body. The outcomes speak for themselves and you can live a longer, more fruitful life as a result of this investment in yourself. Because we have limited time on Earth, I certainly want to maximize mine and I hope other people want to maximize theirs; that's an essential spirit to humanity. We're at our best when we embrace this sentiment.

**Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increasingly growing understanding of the necessity for companies to be mindful of the wellness of their employees. For the sake of inspiring others, can you share steps or initiatives that companies have taken to help improve or optimize their employees' mental and physical wellness?**

Companies acknowledging mental and physical wellness is the most important first step, and providing tools and resources is the next. They should want people to be in touch with their bodies, conscious about the fact that their long-term health depends on the decisions they make now, and the resources to make this all happen. Whether it's nutritional resources, healthcare that promotes preventative medicine as part of its model, reimbursing for physical activity, meditation programs, retreats, there are so many ways people can incorporate this into the employee mentality.

**Ok super. Here is the main question of our interview. What are your "5 Things You Need To Create A Highly Successful Career In The Health and**



**Wellness Industry”? If you can, please share a story or an example for each.**

1. **Be fearless.** This is a relatively new space, and many of us are going to be pioneers in this space. Don't look to follow someone else's lead, follow your intuition says is the right thing that you want to do for others.
2. **Be persistent.** Persistence is probably the most successful trait that anybody can have. Don't give up, keep pushing and trust your gut. You will get there; you just need to keep pushing until you do.
3. **Practice what you preach.** For too long, I saw doctors giving health advice to patients, but they weren't taking it themselves. I would see pulmonologists tell a lung cancer patient that they have to stop smoking and then go right in the back and smoke a cigarette themselves. I've seen obese physicians telling diabetics they need to stop consuming carbohydrates and sugar, and then going back to the break room to eat a donut. If you want to exude confidence in your advice, you need to be living it.
4. **Continuously challenge yourself.** Understand that this is going to be evolution and embrace that. Always look to improve yourself every day and try to find new things that inspire you. Always embrace that human need of continual improvement.
5. **Don't let opposition get to you.** Be a wall to ideas, thoughts or really anything that tries to say what you're doing is wrong. At the end of the day, if you feel good about what you're doing, drown out the noise and just push forward.

**You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would promote the most wellness to the greatest amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)**

There is no doubt about this in my mind. I would start a movement where I would go to the bureaucracy and politicians who have some control over the way our health industry is created, and promote the idea of preventative medicine. I would tell them that the treat-when-sick model isn't going well for anyone in the public — it's only going well for the medical industry. If we really want this to be about the people, we need to promote the idea of preventative medicine. Though it's expensive at the





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beginning, the dividends pay to the population and the country at the end. From this, there would be a decrease in suffering, hospitalization, and costs to the medical industry at the end of life. Most importantly, you increase the health, happiness, and emotional wellbeing of the people in your country.

There are some countries that do a very good job in embracing this kind of movement — Japan being the model of that. We need our own American or western version of this; we can't just sit back and let people slowly kill themselves.

**We are blessed that some very prominent names in Business, VC funding, Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch, and why? He or she might just see this if we tag them.**

Karen Lynch, CEO of the CVS Health Group. She's in a position to make large changes to the overall health model for many millions of Americans. I would love to sit down with her and discuss ways that we can emphasize preventive and personalized health paradigms for all Americans to avoid chronic illness and minimize medication dependency in our later decades of life.

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