



## Mold And The Brain

Christine Schaffner, N.D. interviewing  
Jessica Peatross, M.D.



### **Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Welcome everyone, to the Mycotoxin and Chronic Illness Summit. I'm Dr. Christine Schaffner and I'm here today with my dear friend and colleague Dr. Jessica Peatross, and we're gonna be talking about mold in the brain. Welcome Dr. Jess, it's so fun that I get to interview you today.

### **Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah, I'm honored to be here. Thanks so much for having me.

### **Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah so, you and I both connect on so many levels and we see a very similar patient population and it's really the patient population who are listening, right? And it's the patient population who probably hasn't maybe connected with a doctor like you or I yet, and are still in this, you know, kind of sea of over-information, overwhelm and not knowing, you know, where to begin. So, I'd love if you don't mind, just really painting your kind of perspective of how you got to see like mold as such an integral part to your patient's healing journey.



**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

It's interesting, I actually have a personal story about this.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Oh.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

So, you know, I think so, one of my favorite sayings in the world is, "the cracks are where the light enters," by Rumi. And that's sort of what happened to myself and my fiancé. He was actually diagnosed with mold illness as well as Lyme and biotoxin illness as a whole. And I was like most medical doctors, I was like, "what? Mold, that causes like red eye, watery eyes and a running nose, and sneezing, is that what you mean? That kind of mold?" And so it sent me on sort of a rabbit hole, like so many other chronic illness patients that are left to research things on their own. I kind of became one of them, a researcher for my fiancé. And I really, of course, came across Ritchie Shoemaker's work and Lauren Tessier's work. And some of those other people on "Surviving Mold." And it really inspired me, because it seemed that mold was a catch off for so many other problems. And I really wanted, always want to get to the root cause of why people are suffering.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah, I know, I'm so grateful. The silver lining, right? The light came through the cracks for, and in not only helping your fiancé recover, but also, you know, just putting you on this journey, 'cause once you start looking that's it you see this as so pervasive. And so, so many people have this as a really deep reason why they're sick. So, Jess, tell me about, you know, we wanna focus on brain, right? And I see a lot of neurological conditions, you know, and there's so many symptoms obviously related to the brain and the nervous system. So, why don't you start painting the picture of how does mold affect the brain?



**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Perfect, so I just wanna explain to people that mold is a multicellular fungus. It's sort of a, most people have heard of Candida or a yeast as I call it. Its mold is like its old, dirtier cousin and its rather than being one cell, it's multicellular. And it's interesting because it forms hyphae or these thread-like structures in the air as well as spores that produce volatile organic compounds. And so these things love fat, they're what we call lipophilic, as doctors, which mean they hide in the fat or adipose tissue. Some of them connected and lymph tissue as well and the brain is 70% fat. And so, really you gotta think about how is it getting into these fat tissues in the brain. And one of the biggest ways is we can inhale these spores or hyphae, they hang, they're kind of semi heavy. They hang in the air and if you touch them, they kind of act like one of those little dandy lines you used to blow as a kid, they go everywhere. And so you can imagine breathing those into your sinus cavities, in your indoor air, where 90% of us spend our time, or we spend 90% of our time, excuse me. And the goodness gracious, those can get lodged up in the sinus cavities up in our nasal microbiome. And that's, right really a fast track to our brain and our cranial cavity. And there have been studies, case studies and beyond that show that, type three inhalational Alzheimer's is linked to mold as well.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Mm hm, yeah I had a personal story with my mom actually, and she had a mold exposure and she, she saw it as depression and also memory issues. And I'm so glad you mentioned that type three inhalation Alzheimer's from Dr. Bredesen, 'cause I think that, that sometimes really puts the pieces together for people like, "Wow, you know that? "I can't believe that can be the root cause". And that brain fog is such a huge piece to this puzzle. So, Dr. Jess, so we have, this complex, right? So we have many of our patients are like affected by mold in the way that you shared. And then when we treat these chronic illnesses, it feels like whack and mold in some ways, right? You know, we're looking at the mold, we're looking at parasites, we're looking at even Candida overgrowth. We're looking at retrovirus and viruses, all of these things. And so can you share, what's your perspective as we look at this today and looking at all of these things and is mold maybe the leading factor?



**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Possibly, you know, it's a, for me the big three, excuse me, are mold, lyme, and parasites really. I do think, but depending on the person, parasites or mold can be one or the biggest gun in most people and they often play off each other, because mold can spin the immune system into a Th1 imbalance that leaves an underactive, Th2. So people can actually, which takes care of parasites. So people can actually be at risk for one and then because it swings the immune system out of balance, be at risk for the other too. Mold in general, it really, really disrupts our immune system, disrupts neuro peptide and neurotransmitter release in the brain. And when that happens, we really have a cascade of symptoms and overall immunity is decreased and then we're at risk for so many other things that you just mentioned. Really, it's a very, very difficult to have mold without having an accompanying yeast problem, it's very difficult to have mold without other immune problems and joint and autoimmune symptoms as well. And so this is something, I think that I would be remiss if I said that it wasn't something that most patients should be looking at if they're having mystery symptoms.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Thank you for that. And how, like when you approach any patient or guide people in uncovering, the root cause of their health, how do you start approaching and teasing out and, is mold a factor to focus on and really looking deeper in their environment?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

For sure. So I really spend a lot of time with people up front asking very detailed questions about their lifestyle, about their diet, about their exposures, about what they do on from nine to five and even beyond on their daily basis. And how, you know, I have screen drainage pathways with people. And with mold, especially, there are certain questions that are very helpful to ask people, do you feel better when you leave your place of residence and then feel worse when you come back, same thing for work or school or wherever you spend most of your time you don't feel well. Do you feel worse on rainy days? Do you feel like your symptoms relapse and come back? Do you feel or have difficulty holding your urine? Do you feel short of breath



sometimes? Do you have brain fog, fatigue, chronic joint pains, pins and needle sensations on your extremities? All of these are questions that don't seem to relate to each other, to most people, but for someone who understands that mold is a all out systemic attack and that can cause all of these in your different organ systems and different symptoms in those systems. You need to understand mold can do this because it comes from the brain down.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

And no, that's great. I love that question, I often ask that too, like do you feel better when you're, leaving there, place and then, come back and you feel worse. And so I don't wanna digress too much in this, but I always love a lot of our community's perspectives. And how do you like to guide people on testing for mold? And then do you have like some way you go-to resources, like one's mold is like uncovered as an issue in the environment? Like how do you live people, 'cause that's the overwhelm 'cause people think, okay, I got a chance. Do I have to move? And do I have to like, redo my whole house. And so just maybe walking through that part of the puzzle of, the anxiety that this can provoke for people.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

I understand. I mean, honestly, it's one of my, it's my least favorite part of my job to tell people there might be something wrong with their home. It's the worst, really. Because it's not cheap. It's pretty, expensive to get this done properly. And so, yes, I tell people, there are a number of ways you can do this. So there's the basic mycotoxin urine test from a number of different companies. And you really wanna make sure that people have their drainage pathways open before you do that. Because if you're not able to sweat, you're not able to go to the bowel movements regularly, your lymph is stuck and stagnant. You're probably not gonna release mold spores properly for the test as well. I've definitely seen that happen too. There are some blood tests that can be taken that sometimes aren't quite as accurate. And then I like to match any sort of testing that we do to testing in the home as well. And testing the home. My favorite is the Environmental Relative Multi Index testing or ERMI test. And the ERMI test is an environmental protection agency developed test, that does air testing and swiping and air testing to look for different samples of, or



species of mold. And they average it out at the bottom score. So really people need to look at each individual score of molds symptoms, the spores individually are very, very high and too high for some sensitive individuals, but because the final scores averaged out, it looks better than it is. So this is kind of complicated testing, lots of people haven't heard of this before. And so you really need to find a great practitioner that is skilled in understanding, ERMI testing. A remediation team or a mold expert that understands how detrimental mold can be for certain people's health, because you don't want someone who would properly remediate your home.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah, definitely. And do you have any favorite like websites or resources for, like how to make sure that these people are legit, in the mold remediation world?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

For sure. Absolutely. So, I really, for the ERMI test, let me give, just give the ERMI test first. The ERMI test, I like [envirobiomics.com](http://envirobiomics.com). They actually test for not only mold but gram negative bacteria and actinomycetes as well, which is found that even more commonly than mold in some water damaged homes. As far as people testing that I trust, there's a fellow named Michael Rubino who has, getting ready to have a self-taught and self education mold course in the home for people, which I think is really great. You guys can learn about how to where and how to look for mold in house and how to find it and where it might be if you're educated properly by the right people? I also like, Yesweinspect, which is Brian Karr's company through mold finders. And just a couple other tests for people. The Macon's nasal swab test is another test that looks for possible mOld growth by testing for an antibiotic resistance staff in the nose. And then there's the visual contrast test, which is great because it's like 12 bucks. So anyone can afford it. And really 92% of mold patients fail this visual contrast test. It's a circle with spokes in it and mold patients have a lot of visual problems and floaters and blurry vision. So the spokes blur together and they actually fail that test. So that's a really great test for people to know about too on [survivingmold.com](http://survivingmold.com).



**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Thank you. Thanks for all of those practical tips. And so if you're out there and you haven't gone down, this avenue and you're still struggling, please check out on the resources that Dr. Jess just shared with us. And I wanna talk about some other mechanisms about how mold affects us, but I'd love us to also, I think, you know, in this day and age, right, there's increase in what we would call these mental health conditions, right? So anxiety, depression, even bipolar, different labels, insomnia all of this. And so in your clinical experience, have you ever seen that mold could be a trigger for the neuro inflammatory presentation that these symptoms, they're so rampant now? I think we're just on this precipice of looking at mental health from this whole other environmental perspective. So, just curious about your thoughts.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah, it's so odd, if our beloved animal or pet has a personality change over night, we say, "oh, they have some sort of infection", but if a family member does we say, "oh, they need, some sort of, they have a mental illness", right? They have some sort of psychotic break. So it's just interesting how we view animals differently than people. For sure.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

You know, the vets are onto, whatever the vets are doing. they know a lot, right?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

They do.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

They know a lot about this chronic infection world.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah, perspective is everything.



**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Right?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

So, I was, there's a specific study that comes to my mind, I think from 2006 or 2007. And they called it groundbreaking in the study. And it was about how major depressive disorder was linked to household mold and they couldn't believe it in this study. And now it's kind of known that there's a link to this. We even think that people who have hallucination sometimes at certain homes may have a mold link there as well in some of the studies. And for sure, we're activating microbial activation in the brain, which mold has been shown to be able to do. It does create its own cytokine storm. This is the OG of all cytokine storms before, this new virus came around, for sure mold can do that. And it absolutely imbalances the immune system. And really, when you're decreasing something like, when I say stimulating hormone or MSH in the brain or really messing and inhibiting anti-diuretic hormone, those have consequences in us, in our mental persona and our personality as well. Mold because it decreases the neuro peptide, MSH or melanite stimulating hormone in the brain that decreases endorphin production that decreases melatonin production. So you're talking about people who have difficulty sleeping insomnia all the time. They may have pain all over their body. They have may have mental pain because they have such a lack of endorphins. There's been studies that show inhibition of anti-diuretic hormone is linked to autistic like behaviors. And so, you know, the moldies who really are all almost termites, they don't wanna talk to anyone. They have this social isolation almost because of what they're going through. And it may be linked to some of this going on in the brain.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah, I know, that's great. And yeah, 2006, 2007, right? Where, talking about and I don't think that literatures have been made it too much into mainstream yet unfortunately, but hey, we'll keep at it. And I see that, I mean, I see in my patients, their mental emotional state be severely affected by these things. And when they start cleaning up their environment, cleaning up their bodies, they are themselves



again. And I always love to remind people when they're going through this, it's all gonna come back. Cause I think people worry, right? Is my brain gonna come back? Am I gonna connect to who I am again?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

They literally say, I feel like I'm getting Alzheimer's.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's a really common, yeah. Like, am I gonna lose my brain? Right?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

So, if you know, what they've been through, isn't enough, right? To have the, brain symptoms. So, Dr. Jess, so maybe some strategies and tools, some of your favorite things to recover a moldy brain.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Moldy brain. Yeah. You guys can get your brain back. That's the great news. You really, really can. And I have people who are very young, think they're coming down with a neurodegenerative condition and make a full recovery because it was something like this rampant mold growing behind a wall that no one knew was there in their home. And that's another clue guys, most people don't know it's there. So first and foremost, the number one rule in environmental medicine that causes chronic preventable disease is avoidance. So if you think, or have an inkling that you're exposed to this, your health is worth so much more. So, really take that first initial step to investigate, do that test in the home, do that test on your body, reach out to a trusted practitioner if you feel like you need help, it's really that important because there are a lot of people, there are some people I can get better if they're in a moldy house there other people are so sensitive, they cannot get better until there is avoidance. I know you've probably seen that too.



**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah, and so, the other thing that I really start with moldy patients is I want them to understand that mold goes after not only fat tissue, but it also goes after mitochondria and liver next. And what does, what organs have the most mitochondria, little energy makers that make ATP? The brain has some of the most of any organ in the body. And so when you feel like your brain isn't working, it literally is not able to make energy or ATP you're right on. And so really when we start to support those mitochondria and their function to make that ATP and make energy, your brain starts to kind of come back online and you start to have that more pop in your step that brain fog sort of lifts a little bit and you can form sentences and recall people's names again. Really opening drainage pathways in general, the glymphatic and lymphatic system are extremely important to get unstuck. One of my favorite sayings is stagnation breathes disease. Couldn't be more true.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Couldn't be more true. And so you really need to get to things flowing in the body. The bile is where a lot of mold likes to hide too. It's also breaks down fat so you have a lot of fat content there too. So really looking at things like ursodeoxycholic acid, I really like tory ursodeoxycholic acid, cause tory crosses the blood brain barrier to help mental health. And this helps extend the bile, it helps things move. Remember we got things moving, going to the bathroom two to three times per day with normal solid well formed bowel movements is really important. Being able to sweat because you can literally sweat out mold spores you guys. I've seen it happen. And so one of my favorite things to do is take a binder, put someone in infrared sauna or hot detox bath, and then take a binder when they get out and really avoid it, it's turning on your drainage pathways that I just talked about by very tailored supplementation.



And then really doing things like sweating, castor oil packs, movement in the sunlight, binders to pull out what doesn't belong.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

You become an honorary naturopath, Dr. Jess.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

I do. I mean seriously, it just makes so much sense.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

I love it. I love it. You know I love, I love that you are doing this work and that you're embracing all this, right? And it's just amazing how that whole equation is not in conventional medicine yet. It's just incredible, but we're gonna get there with, people like yourself, we're gonna get there. And I'm gonna go back to your protocol in a moment. But I also, I know that you talk a lot about hormonal health and looking at, women's health and our reproductive system and, mold can be an endocrine disruptor. So, I would love for you to share that mechanism before we dive into some, even more treatments.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Absolutely. One of my least favorite, I'm such a nerd, but one of my least favorite species of mold is *Fusarium*, which produces zearalenone, a certain mycotoxin. And this zearalenone actually confuses our body. It looks a lot like estrogens. So it can bind to estrogen receptors and actually in all the animal studies, we have a plethora of them causes hyperestrogenic syndrome. I mean, to the point where piglets are born with like enlarged labias, like it was pretty bad when they ate moldy maize or moldy corn. So we have a direct link to what it does to animals because they always have the moldy food there. And so we do have this in our food. We know this, we do have this zearalenone inside water, water damaged building type of mycotoxin so it does. It is produced in water damaged buildings as well as in the food supply. And so, we really have to be careful if we're living in something like zearalenone an Aqua toxin, which can be produced by penicillin or aspergillosis also can act as a mild estrogen mimicker. And so these two are known as endocrine disruptors. They can



swing our hormones way out of balance by binding to estrogen receptors and fooling our body. And so these things they've been shown over and over in animal studies, they're just now coming out in the human studies and showing what they can do. And so if you guys are living in a water damaged building or home where you suspect that you are, and your, let's say you're a woman, your cycles are crazy, crazy PMS, bloated, irritable, so much pain consider that it could be the water damage in your home.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah, I know, that's a great overview. And I think even the zearalenone is called a micro-estrogen, right? So they even have a language, it's like these things--

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Clearly, mimic estrogen on top of already an environment that we have so many, estrogens, in our environment as well. So, it's amazing that, what we're, how resilient we are in light of all, all these assaults on the estrogen receptors in--

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Everything. Geez. Yeah.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

So Jess, your protocol is called kill, bind, sweat, right? And you've already alluded to, in what way, you walk people through, but I just go deeper into it. I want people to know like the killing part, the binding part, the sweating part and how you people's health.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

It was kind of an accident that it caught on. It was sort of caught on virally and I didn't expect it. It just kind of sounds catchy and sexy, I guess, but basically you really only need the binding and sweating for mold. But let's be honest, mold doesn't run



by itself. It's got a ton of frenemies that run in the toxin bucket with it, like yeast that I eluded to earlier. And usually there's so different types of bacteria in that healing process going on, all of them are together, right? So, kill, bind, sweat is usually reserved for people who do have obituated drainage pathways and have rarely prepped their body and are ready for that. I really like something like, people have heard of Biocidin, you can use oil of oregano. You can use all kinds of different, any killing herb that you prefer or any product that you prefer, or that's worked for you. You might wait 20, 30 minutes and take a binder. Something like, I really love south coast binders. They're wonderful, the best in the market, in my opinion. But we also have things you guys have heard of, bentonite and Zeolite clay, activated charcoal, diet tenacious earth, things like this. You can then, even chlorella you guys sometimes can work, right? Chlorella is a great one too. Then get in a sauna, if you're lucky enough to have access to a sauna. You could also work out. You can also get in the hot bath and drink some ginger tea beforehand to help yourself sweat. And sweating is a great way to release heavy metals. Things like cadmium, nickel, mercury. It's also a great way to release mold spores and different things like PCBs and the endocrine disruptors we were talking about.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Love that. Do you have, I know this question probably comes up all the time, but do you have any favorite go to, saunas or products through... I'm so thrilled that even though I know it's still an expense that there are so many more on the market that make this way more accessible and affordable. So I'm just, I'm sure people are curious, like what do you recommend?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah, I always like you try to think about the energy that is in the room and what produces what, and what you're exposed to that are maybe admirable frequencies that we can't see. And so, if you have something like an infrared sauna, you are at risk for probably high, electromagnetic radiation production. So I like low EMF saunas. I think those are great. Therasage makes a pretty affordable, portable one for people that is low EMF. Low tox if you're really sensitive to chemicals and things like that, you have a trouble with dizziness, breathing them in, you should, this should be a okay



for you. If you like the big Cedar saunas, I love Clearlight sauna, which is also low EMF too. I actually own one of them. So I practice what I preach.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

How often are you spending a week? How often are you in the sauna?

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Honestly, probably once or twice, but really I work out, I try and work out, move my body every day. I feel like that's such a privilege. If you're able to move your body, it's like almost like praising your temple. I know that sounds corny, but really for me, like I think it's a privilege to be able to move every day.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah, absolutely. And I know, and I also try to, sweat every day you feel so much better. It's a great way to start your day and, just get your energy right for the day, right. So...

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Yeah. Shake that, all that out, all that negativity.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Totally. So, Dr. Jess what are you like inspired or, anything that you're really excited or inspired about that you wanna share with the chronic illness community that's on your heart at the moment.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

I just really have a very strong feeling that all the ancient knowledge that has been hidden from conventional and mainstream medicine, and from many of you guys, it's gonna keep opening and pouring out and there's gonna be new revelations. And all the things that you guys think you can't afford, that you need to heal or that your body can't do it, you're gonna be shocked. You're gonna be absolutely floored at what's coming out at what you're gonna learn and what your body can do. At what is reversible that you were taught was not. And that your body is this miraculous vessel



that when given the right recipe can actually do miraculous things. And you're really, I think people are gonna be mad. They're gonna be mad that they didn't know before, because it's gonna be, trust me you guys, you're gonna have all the hope and you're gonna be amazed. And I just wanna leave people with hope because I really feel strongly that this is coming.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Yeah, no, I agree with you. I think that obviously this is, an interesting time to be on the planet. And even prior to this, last two years, we saw so much suffering that a lot of this community has gone through from this not being served or not being validated. And I think, yeah, I'm really excited about these innovative or elegant solutions, right, that could really accelerate our healing in a way that we probably haven't even dreamed up yet, so.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

I, yes.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Love that. I love that inspiration. So, Dr. Jess, you have a lot of ways that people can connect with you and learn from you and heal with you. So please share how people can find you.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Sure. So I like, like Dr. Christine just said I've hierarchated to these things. So if you guys just wanna look at my website, I have a ton of free information on there, and especially the FAQs and how to do kill, bind and sweat. And just questions that my audience online asked me that I answered for free on the website. So that's drjessmd.com DrJessmd.com. And then I'm really active on social media, 'cause I teach her free on there and I have a lot of fun with it as well. So Dr. Jessica Peatross on Facebook, Dr.Jess.MD on Instagram and now unfortunately for me TikTok, my team made me do it. And then finally, finally, my app is the highest hierarchy. We can have a live webinar tomorrow. We're gonna have a consult live with someone that's a subscriber. So please join in guys. We do all kinds of interactive stuff and you can talk



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to me on the webinars, on the community forum. I do professional videos and courses, and there's so much more on there. I can't even explain it in a reasonable amount of time. So that's [app.drjessmd.com](http://app.drjessmd.com).

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Awesome. Well, you're doing incredible work and helping shift the paradigm out there. So thank you so much for being on the summit and all the information and wisdom you shared today. I really appreciate it.

**Jessica Peatross, M.D.**

Thank you for having me.

**Christine Schaffner, N.D.**

Thank you.

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