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THE EMERGING ROLE OF THE VAGUS NERVE IN CANCER & OTHER DISEASES

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Chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and dementia, are major causes of morbidity and mortality, worldwide. While these diseases have different clinical manifestations, is it possible that their underlying pathology is similar? Can one factor be related to their etiologies and possibly protect from developing them or from poor prognosis in people inflicted by them? In my talk, we will explore these diseases, and the role of the vagus nerve in protecting against them. Cancer, heart disease and dementia are caused by specific local cellular abnormalities, to which in all three, inflammation, oxidative stress and sympathetic over-activity contribute. Vagal nerve activity inhibits all three contributing factor. Furthermore, vagal nerve activity either predicts lower risk of these diseases or better prognosis in people with these conditions. Finally, various simple behavioral interventions such as deep paced breathing, increase vagal nerve activity. My talk will present these findings, with specific emphasis on our current work in cancer.

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