

# Physician targets children with ‘milk and cookies disease’

By **LINDA FRIEDEL**  
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Lynn Crist was at the end of her rope with an ailment that would not stop. She looks back now, however, grateful that those days are just a memory.

“We lived with it for a really, really long time,” said Crist of Shawnee, Kan. “It always developed into more symptoms. We felt hopeless and helpless.”

Crist’s daughter, Allison, began coughing for weeks and months at a time beginning when she was 18 months old. As Allison grew, the symptoms worsened, Crist said. She coughed so hard she would vomit or spike a fever. When she went to school her coughing disrupted the class. Running encouraged the coughing spells and so did cold weather. Allison gave up her physical education class and after-school soccer.

“She couldn’t stop coughing all night long,” Crist said. “She would throw up when the cough would get so bad. It got worse as she got older.”

The constant coughing would last for up to three weeks, all day and all night, Crist said. Then it would stop for several weeks when Crist and her husband hoped the symptom would cease for good. Allison started coughing once again and the cycle repeated, Crist said.

“It drove us crazy. It’s hard to listen to it all day long,” Crist said. “Eating would make it worse. A cough drop would make it worse. It was much worse when she would eat.”

Allison had been treated for symptoms when they first appeared, Crist said, but nothing worked. Her pediatrician prescribed a daytime and nighttime inhaler, which did not stop the coughing, Crist said. Allison had been diagnosed with asthma, but by the time she reached nine years old, Crist no longer believed she had asthma. The pediatrician recommended Allison to an allergy specialist who sent her to a pediatric otolaryngologist specialist.

“I was cautiously optimistic,” Crist said of her first visit with Julie Wei, MD, pediatric otolaryngologist specialist.

She watched the documentary that Wei played during the first visit, then cried. It seemed to be based on their daughter’s life, she said.

“Everything we saw on there was exactly our story,” Crist said.

Wei told Crist she could fix her



Submitted photo

Julie Wei, MD, pediatric otolaryngologist specialist in Kansas City wrote self-published ‘A Healthier Wei: Reclaim Health for Misdiagnosed and Overmedicated Children’ to help families overcome what she calls, ‘milk and cookies disease.’

daughter’s problem without any medication and it will not require any surgery. Crist liked the Wei’s confidence, she said.

“She seemed so certain of her self,” Wei said. “I was very cautiously optimistic.”

Wei asked Allison to use a sinus rinse for a month and to cut back on dairy products for a while. Her sinuses were filled with mucous and needed to heal. The family made the changes, then gradually re-introduced dairy products into Allison’s diet once her sinuses healed. They also eliminated dairy products several hours before Allison’s bed time. Crist said Allison has not coughed since.

“She has never been sick once,” Crist said. ‘It’s almost a miracle how simple it was.

It’s been amazing.”

Wei says she has treated thousands of children in the past nine years with symptoms like Crist’s daughter. Parents come to her because their otherwise healthy children have chronic symptoms of nasal congestion and cough that other physicians diagnose as sinus infection, asthma, sore throats and recurrent croup, she said. Over a period of five years, Wei interviewed families on their children’s diet and dietary habits, specifically

their eating and drinking habits in the evening. Wei said she discovered an “epidemic” that she calls the milk and cookie disease.

“It makes sense to me,” she said. “I have a long history of upset stomach. ‘Personally I suffer from it. It comes all the way back in the throat. Throat is one of the most sensitive areas in the body.’”

Wei said a cultural belief in the U.S. supports the habit of milk at bedtime and night time snacking. Night time snacking, in addition to excessive dairy and sugar consumption contribute to physiologic reflux she believes is the cause of these symptoms. Wei said after treating thousands of children and their families successfully by modifying their diet and dietary habits, she has been able to empower families. Parents can take their children off of the long-term use of many medications, including antibiotics and allergy and asthma medications, she said.

“We just want to prescribe with medicine,” Wei said. “I want to get all of these kids out of the health care system. It’s going to save millions of dollars. It’s going to improve their quality of life.”

Wei said there are many good doctors with good intentions, including pediatricians and allergists who prescribe medication and inhalers. Parents come to her saying they are using the medicine their physician prescribed, but their child is not getting better. Wei listened and wondered what was going on, she said.

“Nobody’s taking them off. Doctors just kept adding more medicine,” she said. “This is how our world is. I am frustrated. I do not believe children should be on all these medicines and not get better.”

Wei reflected on her Chinese heritage to solve the problem, she said. When her mother wanted to cure an ailment, she reached for the kitchen cupboard, Wei said. Wei recently self-published “A Healthier Wei: Reclaim Health for Misdiagnosed and Overmedicated Children” to help families understand the connection between what they eat and the impact on their health.

“My message is not just what you eat, but what time,” Wei said. “I am wanting to start the conversation about when were eating.”

Wei said she is not against the consumption of specific food groups, rather she is concerned about when

families make time to eat in their fast-paced lives.

“We’re rushing, constantly rushing to get one place to another,” Wei said. “We’re trying to squeeze everything in. It impacted everything as a family.”

Consuming food within several hours of going to bed, whether it is a bowl of ice cream, an orange or a piece of pizza can cause acid reflux, Wei said. It is based on the same principle why patients are told not to eat before surgeries, she said.

“Your gut stops moving,” she said. “We are culturally brainwashed and taught that dairy is good for you. Feeding is an act of love.”

Wei said she is committed to helping families reclaim healthy lives. Modern families zoom from one activity to the next and eat out too often and too late, she said. Wei says she is far from perfect and is as vulnerable as the next family. She recently reduced one of her daughter’s activities to give the family more down time, she said.

“I am so committed and passionate about children’s health,” Wei said. “We need to look at it differently. So many kids are sick.”

Wei did not conduct a formal study for the book, she said. She based it on patients’ testimonies, instead. The book is for families, she said.

“It’s written for anybody, everyone – care takers, educators, teachers,” Wei said. “It’s a reflection of my Chinese heritage. This is not just a book with a list of what to eat and what to do. [It is] looking at big picture.”

Peggy Bowles, RN, has worked with Wei for six years. She said Wei knows how to listen to her patients and continues to interview families and patients about their dietary habits, she said.

“She is so passionate about this milk and cookies disease,” Bowles said. “She is seeing results. She knows it works.

Parents are skeptical to believe that simply changing dietary habits can lead to better health, Bowles said. Most of Wei’s patients are willing to try, she said.

“Some of the parents are reluctant at first to make the changes, but when they come back with results they are happy. The kids feel better. They sleep better. They are eating better.”

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