

Physician's quest for wellness leads to Lake Norman

by Rick Haag

Rashid Buttar, DO bought Dick Hutchinson's old ranch south of the lake last fall. Hutchinson raced cars for many years and also raised Paso Fino horses. It's like Hutchinson enjoyed his little farm's peace and quiet after a noisy day at the racetrack.

In his own way, Dr. Rashid Buttar also has found escape from the track, here at his new ranch.

Buttar's trade was the emergency room, after training in general surgery for three years and then switching to emergency medicine. People were a faceless blur of traumas, fevers and pains to be sized up in 30 seconds and stabilized in The Golden Hour. And family? Buttar figures he had three days off one year — two of them to take exams.

No more.

Buttar's life might still appear hectic — weekends in ER, weekdays starting a new practice, cosmetic surgery on the side and long night hours of study. Yet when he drives the 10 minutes home for lunch, wades past two enthusiastic German shepherds and is greeted by his daughter, Buttar knows he is on the right track.

There's peace here. And there's opportunity to build a medical practice that he believes will have a profound impact on the health of his Lake Norman neighbors.

Medical alternatives

Buttar has joined a growing number of physicians who believe there are other tools besides strong chemicals and surgery for keeping and restoring good health. Among his assertions:

Cancer can be cured — is being cured — with these new methods.

Arteries can be cleared with a simple procedure that's safer, cheaper and far more effective than heart surgery.

Common tests, analyzed in new ways, yield vast new information on a person's health.

A few simple steps — proper nutrition, the right vitamins and minerals, adequate exercise, stress control, plenty of water and abstinence from cigarettes and other vices - can prevent or reverse most human ailments.

"Aging and diseases do not have to go hand in hand," he says. "Many people believe that and it is absolutely not true."

Buttar recently opened his practice, Advanced Concepts in Alternative and Preventive Medicine, to help people who aren't responding to other conventional treatments.

"My goal is to practice medicine the way it will be practiced in 15 years," Buttar tells a visitor. "In 15 years heart surgery will not be the first line of treatment for cardiovascular disease."

Buttar traveled a long road to Lake Norman, originally coming from a small midwestern town, Rosebud, Mo., population 305. He got his Eagle Scout at age 14, the youngest person to achieve the coveted honor in the US that year. He started college at age 17 at the prestigious Washington University on a full ROTC military scholarship. Four years later, he graduated with a double major in Biology and Theology at age 21 and received his commission in the US Army as a 2nd Lieutenant.

Buttar then attended medical school at the University of Osteopathic Medicine and Health Sciences, College of Medicine and Surgery in Des Moines, Iowa. He graduated four years later as the youngest graduating member of his medical school class at age 25.

After a general surgery internship, Buttar served

as an Army Brigade Surgeon in Korea. He later spent two years in residency at Brooke Army Medical Center in surgery, then switched to emergency medicine. After serving with US Special Operations Command, he finished his military career as the head of the Fort Jackson (S.C.) Emergency Medicine Department at Moncrief Army Community Hospital.

Turning points

Buttar says two experiences in the military led him down the road to Lake Norman.

One happened at Brooke Army Medical Center, while he was a resident. The hours were intense, and doctors rarely saw their families. One day a friend broke down and began to sob: His own young daughter no longer recognized him.

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It was like a splash of cold water to Buttar — "divine intervention," he says. His own daughter, Sarah-Aisha, was already 6 months old and he'd hardly seen her: He knew he couldn't let that happen to his daughter.

The other revelation came on a hectic day at the Fort Jackson emergency room. Among the patients was a woman with a swollen foot.

Buttar says he treated her in the typical way: take 30 seconds to ask a few questions, order a test for more data, then choose the course of action.

The woman had been treated for cancer. The swelling was due to lymphatic obstruction secondary to mass affect from recurrence of the cancer. Her treatment had failed.

Buttar gave her the grim news, order a CT scan to assess the recurrence and advised her to see her oncologist. He was done, ready to move on, until she spoke.

"She looked at me like it was all my fault," he recalls. Then she said, "I would rather die than have chemo again, and let you [people] ever touch me again."

That response caught Buttar off guard. "I'm inclined to go in, figure out a problem, take care of it and move on, and here is a woman who looked me in the eye and said, 'You [people]...'"

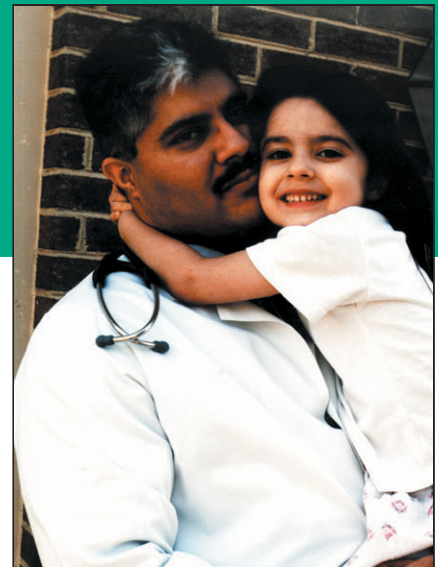
He did something that ER doctors rarely do. He sat down beside her. That simple act softened the woman and changed Buttar: "I stopped seeing her as just a person to get past so I could move on to the next patient," he says. "We talked about how serious she was about not using chemotherapy. I said I'd seen something about shark cartilage on '20-20' and maybe she could try it."

With her oncologist's approval, she did, Buttar says. "Three months later, there was a 75 percent reduction in the tumor."

Growing Support

That was the start of Buttar's search for new medical treatments. He now belongs to several groups of physicians, some numbering in the thousands, that serve as networks and support groups for "alternative" medical research and treatments.

He also began to examine his own medical experiences. Why was it, he wondered, that of the thousands of military veterans he'd examined, the healthiest and happiest were those who lived near



or on large bodies of water?

Could there be a link between water, peacefulness and health?

He's become a strong advocate for chelation, a simple procedure for cleansing the body of heavy metals. The process now is used by Buttar and a thousand other physicians nationwide to remove other blood impurities, such as artery clogging excesses of calcium, even though the AMA says more testing is needed.

That conflict between established and alternative medicines is diminishing, Buttar says, as more physicians see benefits. "The only thing I'm after is results," he says, "whether they come through antibiotics or potent herbs or Chelation. I like to call it 'good medicine'," he says.

No longer does Buttar size up patients in half a minute. Now he shows them slide presentations and videotapes and encourages them to be the decision-maker in their treatment. Knowledge is power, he says.

And he's seeing results: the young girl who has found relief from crippling arthritis, the diabetic who now needs less insulin, the cancer patient who has already outlived his previous doctor's prediction.

Place to escape

Back at the ranch, it's lunchtime. Buttar pulls off his beloved cowboy boots at the kitchen door. The dogs have run off to splash some unsuspecting geese. Sarah-Aisha plays in the living room. Beyond the picture window, squirrels run on the deck, and goats and neighbor's horses graze on the hillside.

Buttar relishes the peace. "We love to be out on the farm with the goats and dogs."

Sarah-Aisha is her daddy's jewel. There is nothing better, he says, than those moments when she snuggles beside him to read or just be together.

Earlier in the day, he explained the meaning of his first name, Rashid: One who stays on the right path of life.

"I feel like God has guided me to fulfill that name," he said. "I have had a really blessed life. Even when things seem bad, six months or a year later turn out to be the best thing possible."

Juggling a new practice, ER duty, study and his family has been tough. But Buttar feels led, as he always has. And he feels at peace.

This is right. The race is over. The practice is taking off, with many patients driving long distances for treatment, some even flying in from out of state.

The public is tired of being sick, he says. "Once people locally get to know I'm available, they'll start to use our services."

Want to know more?

Advanced Concepts in Alternative and Preventive Medicine is at 20721 Torrence Chapel Road, Suite 101-102, Cornelius, NC 28031. For more information or appointments call 704-895-WELL (9355).