

Inspiration Behind Constant Health: Cindy's Story

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Many have asked about the inspiration for Constant Health. It's a very personal story that involves our CEO, Cindy Marteney, and a very personal medical emergency in her family. Here's Cindy's story:

It was the middle of the summer of 2006. I was wearing a rut in the road from my office to my dad's room at Salt Lake Regional's Long-Term Acute Care center.

My dad had been in three hospitals and was healing from a horrendous scar after being treated for a **life-threatening case of peritonitis. One doctor** looking at his scar asked wryly, "What did they operate on you with? A hatchet?"

The bad bacteria festering in my dad's gut made it impossible for the surgeons to sew him up after after taking out a particularly inflamed part of his small intestines, hence the ghastly wound that had to heal from the inside out, very slowly at that, since my dad's nutritional status was so poor at that time.

I remember the discharge nurse at Salt Lake Regional shaking her head and saying, "You need to put your dad into long-term, end-of-life hospice care. He doesn't have the will to live."

I didn't believe her assessment. I didn't want to at least. Not that I knew anything about healing or navigating nursing home care. I knew a lot more about prevention, so I pinned my hopes on the healing power of nutrition, **since allopathic approaches seemed to be failing.**

My dad was unceremoniously transferred to a nearby nursing home and **languished in bed with no energy to get up for physical therapy. I saw** firsthand how nursing homes become the dumping ground for frail old people, who sit beached in their wheelchairs by day, staring vacantly through the comings and goings in the hallways. Yikes. I didn't want that **for my dad, ever.**

I wasn't allowed to bring in supplements for my dad (it's against the "rules" at nursing homes). **However, Dr. Rodier had the power of "the script."** He wrote a prescription for a potion that blended four different commercial products (an anti-inflammatory powder, a greens/fiber powder, whey protein, and liquid sea algae).

I dutifully shook up the foul, greenish-looking blend and offered it to my dad. **He practically spit it out. It was kind of funny, for a moment, at least. No amount of coaxing could get him to drink that stuff alone though.**

I started mixing in generous amounts of Hershey's chocolate syrup (I know, not on Dr. Rodier's preferred list, but that's what it took). **My dad said, "Don't be shy with that stuff" (meaning the chocolate syrup). He started** drinking the potion, partly because I was supervising (he took to calling me a "world-class nag") and partly because he liked Dr. Rodier.

To the end, my dad was vain and was always impressed with people who **look good. At 54, Dr. Rodier looked years younger than his age, and my** dad approved of getting advice from a good-looking doctor who spoke with both intelligence and candor.

My dad *hated* the nurses' tendency to use kindergarten voice and the sing-song "How are we doing today?!"

Within days, my dad started feeling more energy and started regaining weight at a nice clip (he had lost 45 pounds and got down to a shocking 110 pounds at his worst). **My dad started attending physical therapy (he thought the therapist was cute, sigh). Feeling better and stronger, he also** wanted me to wheel him out to the patio (he was never one to do work

when someone else was around “to push”).

I’ll never forget the day he felt the sun on those scrawny arms of his. He practically cooed, “That feels so good.”

Each week, my dad made progress. Always the charmer, he endeared himself to everyone, including a 50-something woman named Paula, who had been in an auto accident and was partially paralyzed in her legs.

Paula was the cutest inmate, I mean patient, at the nursing home, and soon my dad was talking about how he and Paula would be dancing by the end of the year. Irreverent and provocative always, he asked if he and Paula could share a room. The head nurse looked at him disapprovingly and said, “Only if you’re married.”

My dad shrugged and said, “I’ve struck out four times, so that’s *not* gonna happen.” It didn’t work out with my dad and Paula either, but he kept **getting stronger and started walking.**

After a couple of months on an intensive regimen of nutrition and physical therapy, my dad felt on top of the world, like he had personally sparred with the Grim Reaper and walked away from the ring with his boxing glove held high in the air. The nursing home staff didn’t feel he was ready to go home, but the eternal optimist, he checked himself out and went back to his home in Camden, South Carolina.

Watching my dad’s physical transformation made me believe that it wasn’t the “lack of will to live” but instead the “lack of nutrition to heal” that was in the way of my dad’s recovery.

I started dreaming about a formula that took the best of that awful-tasting potion, which my dad took only with a good shot of chocolate syrup, and translate it into a formula for ongoing wellness.

I couldn’t stop thinking about it. So, Constant Health was born of pondering how much more good such a formula could do if it *tasted good* and if it was *more affordable*.

You see, the potion my dad was on cost a small fortune, and I knew the Co-op’s many fixed-income seniors could not easily afford what Dr. Rodier prescribed strictly for prevention purposes. Yet, in an acute care setting, attending physicians were unlikely to allow, much less prescribe, such products. A real catch 22, putting this kind of formula out of reach for most folks, either due to cost or availability.

So, I started working on a formula with Dr. Rodier, along with two practicing naturopaths from a leading research institute, and a Ph.D. biochemist, Dr. Dinesh Patel, who advised on the interactions of different ingredients. Discussions about ingredients went on for some time.

For example, while Dr. Rodier recommended inclusion of [indole-3-carbinol](#) or I3C for detoxification of xenoestrogens, Dr. Patel advised we substitute with calcium-d-glucarate, which offered the same detoxifying capacity and had none of the odor or taste problems of I3C.

And, while the naturopaths longed for digestive enzymes and probiotics *in* the formula, I nixed those items because the enzymes would degrade the protein while on the shelf and the probiotics would be vulnerable to die-off with exposure to oxygen in a loose powder. Fish oil in the protein powder was out of the question, even though we all love fish oil for everything.

Surprising things happened in pricing for some of the ingredients while we were in formulation. Vitamin C shortages had pushed up the price for this basic and core ingredient (China controls 80% of the world market for vitamin C and production cutbacks and price-fixing caused this commodity to triple in price this year).

Calcium-d-glucarate got a lot of good press and prices jumped on this ingredient as well. Sigh. So it goes in an ever-changing market.

The flavoring saga I have written about numerous times in my [blog](#).

That was a *big deal*, since we use such significant servings of the strong-tasting curry spices, turmeric (curcumin) and boswellia. We also use noticeably peppery ginger and the bioavailability-booster, bioperine (which is derived from black peppers). And, then there are those whole

red raspberry seeds, with their earthy flavor, and the acidic tastes from vitamin C and quercetin, oh, and the B vitamins (never toast of any party) and so on and so forth.

The science was the easy part. The flavoring part was harder, but I think we finally nailed it. Phew.

When we were well into the formulation and testing cycle and I was pondering the name to give to our new formula, I asked my dad for his thoughts. I was thinking about some, in retrospect, stupid names that didn't get at the value we envisioned. My dad dismissed them all and asked, "How about 'Lifesaver'?"

That's precisely how he saw the formula Dr. Rodier had prescribed for him during the summer of 2006.

And, even though my dad had gone back to his evil ways of eating junk food, smoking like a chimney, and getting little rest (he didn't really think he was mortal, after all), he kept asking "when is your product coming out?"

He refused to drink the old potion once he was back on his own (partly because he was inherently a cheapskate and partly because he hated the flavor). Alas, our formula wasn't ready soon enough for my dad. [My dad died on July 8th](#) at the age of 73.

This fall, and unexpectedly, my mom fell and landed herself in a nursing home with a fractured ankle and a bad stress wound (level 4 - the worst kind). We had early stock of Constant Health and started my mom on the formula, as she was clearly dealing with a lot of systemic inflammation.

My mom's skin started to clear dramatically (with the redness in her face all but disappearing within a couple of weeks). And, her wound started to heal faster than the wound doctor ever expected.

I encouraged my mom to stop drinking the milk they kept putting on her trays at every meal. She protested that it was good for her because it was a good protein source. I pointed her to her itchy scalp and asked her to do a trial, to stop drinking milk for a couple of days and notice how her scalp felt.

Sure enough, the itchiness stopped when she stopped drinking milk. But did this convince her? No! My mom had to keep "experimenting" (read: continue to be noncompliant) before she admitted that milk indeed was the culprit causing her itchy scalp. In fact, she finally admitted that she had had problems with milk for years. Good grief, why all the feigned ignorance?!

My mom ditched the dairy and I convinced her to eat more nuts along with her Constant Health shakes. I also reminded her that we were mixing in extra protein to help her wound heal, so she needn't worry about eating the yucky nursing home liver entrees either.

I'm so glad to have our new product for my mom, as most of the time, she constantly forgets to take her fish oil and SAME (she hates to swallow pills), but she *likes to drink her shakes*.

Selfishly, I like having a choice between handfuls of tablets, capsules, and softgels and an easy-to-drink mix that covers a whole lot of bases (fighting free radicals, boosting glutathione levels, detoxifying and regenerating healthy cells, etc.).

I know, I know. I sell supplements. I have the same cabinet full of red-topped Co-op bottles that you probably have too. I carefully pack a large pillbox whenever I travel.

But sometimes, I get impatient and swallow too many pills at one time. Then, it's that old grimacing-and-gagging-and-grasping-for-water routine that's never pretty. If you're laughing here, then you've been there too! My condolences on your impatience and suffering!

In case you were wondering about my personal favorites, here's my personal top ten: Eye Protection, Heart Plus, Fish Oil, Pancreatic Enzymes, Sam's Advanced Antioxidant, Vitamin D3, Alpha Lipoic Acid, Milk Thistle, B-100 Complex, and Melatonin.

I know. I should take more Liquid Calcium, Magnesium, Joint Complex, and especially Probiotics 16. But I often forget to take my probiotics before

meals (even though I put them out on the counter by the coffee maker so Steve will take them). True confessions, which may get me in trouble at home! But this is precisely the dilemma, so many pills to take.

Enough digression, back to the Constant Health story!

Yesterday, my friend, Eric Bell, who is a chef, helped us spin up some **blender shakes with Constant Health**. That's the fun part of a product that you can drink, tasting parties!

My favorite shakes? Check out [our new recipes](#). I especially like the French Vanilla with banana and walnuts and the Rich Chocolate with banana and almond butter. I thought they were awesome! I also liked berries, yogurt, and raw cashews with the French Vanilla flavor too.

Tess and Eric were more enthused with the French Vanilla blend with a carrot-fresh ginger-orange-tofu-yogurt-tart flavor combo. If you love fresh ginger, this one's for you.

Okay, so the formula is now on the market and some people have wondered whether the new product line is *really* in line with our Co-op mission. Without a question, I think it is.

We're still passionate about offering exceptional products at exceptional prices.

Somewhat comparable products cost on average \$20-40 more than Constant Health, and our formula is both more up to date and offers more significant amounts of ingredients than many other products. Do some research and I think you'll agree.

One of my entrepreneur friends, Ian, looked at me with astonishment and said, "If it's a better product, then why are you offering it for less? That's absolutely crazy!"

Yep. We're a little crazy at the Co-op. A kat writes our newsletter. We don't mind getting an earful from cranky members about anything that's on their minds. And, we trade personal details and bad jokes with people of questionable character all the time.

That's the Constant Health story. It's real. It's personal. It's about science. It's about flavor. And, it's about a formula that rocks!

Just [try it](#) and let us know your thoughts too! ☺

-- [Cindy Marteney](#), CEO, Our Health Co-op