

**D**r. Bhavna Vaidya-Tank—Dr. Tank to her patients—is a board certified family physician who is committed to functional medicine, which is a partnership with her patients in the pursuit of optimal health. She opened the Family Wellness Clinic in Clayton 10 years ago.

“My work with a patient I’ll call Stanley reflects how I feel about and practice medicine,” she notes. Now in his mid-sixties, he first came to Dr. Tank four years ago.

“At the time, Stanley was on many oral medications and had type 2 diabetes. We were at the point where the next step would be to start on insulin.

“I always encourage my patients to understand the disease process as a vital step in understanding what they can do to change it. If you don’t understand why you have diabetes or high blood pressure, for example, you can’t change it.

“Stanley and I sat down and discussed how type 2 diabetes happens in our bodies. He’s very busy, travels a great deal, and actually he’s fairly healthy, if you look at his health from the perspective of the general population. He wasn’t severely overweight, he exercises regularly, and has a normal diet. But he still had diabetes.

“I said ‘You’re not morbidly obese—at 5’6” and 200 pounds—but you are overweight, almost bordering on obese.’ We’re so accustomed to seeing people with a body mass index of 32 that we come to think of that as normal. Sometimes I need to recalibrate my brain, to remind myself that patients with a BMI of 32 or 33 aren’t normal. But they certainly are common.

“So I said to Stanley, ‘The fact is, you have diabetes and your pancreas is over-worked and has been for a long time. We can start on insulin, and it probably would be good for you, but you still have a few of these islet cells which are working, which are basically the cells that make insulin. Do we want to save them, and seek to reverse the condition, or do we just want to go with medications to help manage the problem?’”

## THE PROGRAM

The patient opted for reversal. “We began a weight management program. One of the programs we use is ‘Take Shape for Life,’ developed both by Medifast and specialists at Johns Hopkins about 30 years ago,” Dr. Tank explains.

“A key element in the program and functional medicine is that the patient and the physician become a team. The goal is not simply to lose weight. The goal is to pursue optimal health: understanding the supplements needed to overcome deficiencies, committing to appropriate exercise, getting the right amount of good quality sleep, and being certain to maintain healthy stress levels. This is the whole person approach, and it is exactly what we want to accomplish in this office—ideally with each and every patient.

“Stanley, bless him, became really invested in this program. He was in many ways a perfect patient. So the weight started coming off. We used the Medifast products and limited carbs to about 60 to 80 grams, which is still a good amount, providing excellent nutritional benefits with lots of veggies. We

# The Challenge of Reversing Disease

## BORN TO HEAL

**I**n Sanskrit, the word Vaidya—Dr. Tank’s maiden name—means physician or “one who knows.” In fact, there is a history of healers in her family that dates back at least eight generations in her native Bahrain.

“My grandfather, who is 95, was still a practicing physician until he suffered a stroke last year,” she notes. “My dad is a surgeon and my mother is an ophthalmologist.”

Bahrain is a small island country in the Red Sea. Dr. Tank received a full academic scholarship to attend Kasturba Medical College, where she graduated with honors before completing her residency at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center—where she earned the Patient Advocate and Patient Care Award for engendering a focus on wellness that included functional medicine treatments for pain management and lifestyle and behavioral modifications such as smoking cessation programs and weight loss programs.

She and her husband are the proud parents of a son and daughter.

## SPECIAL SERVICES

**D**r. Tank and staff see patients from age 6 and up, with a strong emphasis on functional medicine, wellness and prevention, and a focus on treating the whole individual and not simply the illness. Special services include advanced LIPID testing, an allergy clinic, and a weight management clinic.

“I care a great deal about finding ways to reverse the disease process itself, and not simply manage it.”



Dr. Tank, in the midst of a routine and very thorough physical exam.

also started supplements that provide energy and balance throughout this process.

“Stanley was losing weight at the rate of five pounds a week. Of course the body is not a machine, it has to calibrate and check with itself so there naturally is plateauing. Through the entire process, the patient and I worked and thought as a team. He would come in for a weight check every week or every other week, and what was especially wonderful was, over time, moving him off his list of medications.

“When we started this process, Stanley—who earlier had suffered a heart attack—was taking 10 different medications, and as we worked together we moved from 10 meds to 8 to 5 and finally to 3.

“This all happened about four years ago, and Stanley has stayed the course. He’s kept the weight off, and he’s not on insulin. He’s now taking just one medication for his diabetes. Clearly the program does work, if you’re invested. It’s not magical, but weight

loss and lifestyle changes can clearly have a significant impact on quality of life.

“Stanley was not in terrible shape when we began this program. With the help of several medications, quite probably he would live with typical life expectancy, but not the best quality. A great many intelligent patients who are invested in their health believe they are dependent on their medications. They don’t understand there are ways to reverse many health issues and attain a higher level of well-being.

“Certainly I am not anti-medications. There are a lot of really wonderful medications, and they keep a lot of people out of the hospital or from having a heart attack. Still, it’s an approach like building a dam to keep everything in rather than reversing the cause and nature of health problems. In this practice, we care about and practice good traditional medicine, and we also care a great deal about finding ways to reverse and prevent the disease process itself, and not simply manage it.”

For more information about services at the Clinic, contact:

**Bhavna Vaidya-Tank, MD**  
**FAMILY WELLNESS CLINIC**

**2076 NC Highway 42-W, Suite 230**  
**Clayton, NC 27520**

**(next to the new JMH hospital)**

**Telephone: (919) 553-5711**

**www.claytonclinic.com**  
**info@claytonclinic.com**