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NEUROSKELETAL DYNAMICS

by Stewart Dawes

Severe back pain became a reality for author and photographer Derek, 41, when an iridologist decided to become his chiropractor. Standing behind his patient, the iridologist placed his knee in the centre of Derek's back and pulled him backward by his elbows. Something deep in his middle back suddenly twinged. From that day, Derek's supple and healthy back became racked with pain every time he bent forward or lifted anything slightly heavy. His daily yoga practice came to an abrupt halt and he started visiting a new chiropractor once a week for the next six weeks. His new chiropractor manipulated his back using various adjustments as well as deep tissue massage, infrared heat treatment and acupuncture, but at the end of the six weeks, the agony continued.

Derek made an appointment to see another chiropractor recommended because he incorporated kinesiology in his treatment. He was convinced he could significantly heal Derek's back problem within a few visits. "Three weeks later, after being subjected to further cracking of my vertebrae and the added assurance that the extensive muscle monitoring was confirming the treatment, I began to despair," recalls Derek. "I was positively willing my back to heal but there was simply no change at all, not even a glimmer of hope." Derek then began to see an acupuncturist. However, by the third consultation, "I knew in my heart that the treatment was not going to work and I left with a heavy feeling of resignation."

Many weeks later, Derek passed a small shop window advertising "pain-free non-manipulative treatment for back pain". Enquiring within, he discovered a treatment known as NSD, a modality developed in South Australia 25 years ago by pioneering therapist Diana Hunter which involves a non-invasive technique of stimulating the body's "neurological transmission points" to activate a process of self-healing.

How does NSD work?

According to Sydney NSD practitioner Robert Dehn, these neurological transmission points trigger an electrical feedback process in the central nervous system. The NSD therapist accesses the body's electrical system by lightly touching specific points on the body along the spine or the joints, and the impulse from the points, located at the intersection of the nerves and the lymphatic system, travels to the cerebral cortex via the sensory nervous system. A resulting signal then travels via the motor nerve system to the corresponding muscles or muscle

groups, which activate to attain correct position of the joint. Muscles and muscle groups contract to provide the necessary adjustment bilaterally.

The brain itself controls the reaction, says Dehn, the patient therefore being almost subconsciously in control of the entire process. "Due to the natural inclination for homeostasis," he says, "the brain will not create a trauma. The only requirement for treatment is that the muscles be completely relaxed to allow the reaction to occur — that the patient is lying flat and the muscles are not acting against the force of gravity."

The body can mostly heal itself of any problems, Dehn says. It just needs the right prompting. "In NSD the neurological transmission points for the entire skeletal system have been mapped and, although most work is done in spinal alignment, it's possible to align the skull suture lines, the jaw and all minor joints within the body."

The treatment must be performed in a strict sequence starting at the hips and sacrum, moving up the vertebral column and finishing at the cranium. "The points have to be touched for about 30 seconds," says Dehn. "When the fingers find the correct point, a practitioner can feel a tingling sensation, a pulsation which is not the patient's blood circulation."

The subtle therapy

NSD is a very subtle muscle/nerve/skeletal technique — so gentle and non-invasive, in fact, it can be performed through clothing. Unlike treatments that try to force a change, NSD resets the body to heal and correct itself. Many patients claim their results are profound and lasting, frequently apparent after two or three sessions. At this stage, NSD's application has no known side-effects and is regarded as appropriate for everyone from highly trained athletes to newborns, to pregnant women, the elderly and infirm. Many NSD practitioners address conditions as diverse as musculoskeletal problems, sporting injuries, general stress, tension, migraines, temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ), carpal tunnel syndrome, arthritis, disc herniation or prolapse, scoliosis and sciatica.

No pain, no gain?

During the treatment most people experience warmth and tingling in their back as their body responds. "It's a very gentle treatment and completely pain-free," assures Dehn. "Some of my patients even fall

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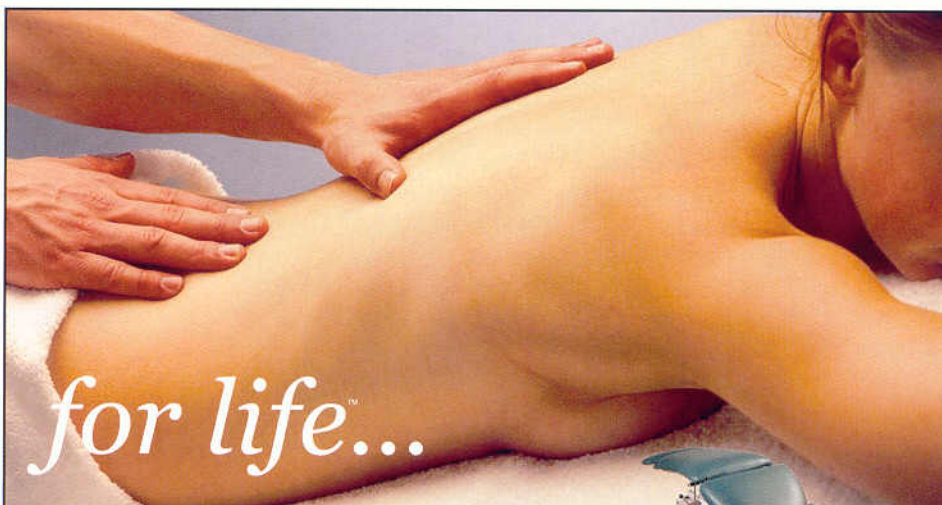
asleep while they're on the treatment table. We have to re-educate people that 'no pain, no gain' is no longer true. Some people are surprised that it feels as if nothing much has been happening, especially if they are used to being physically manipulated." One in 20 patients feels something is shifting in their back straight away. Usually the process takes up to 48 hours as the body realigns itself at a rate that's comfortable for it. A hot bath is recommended at night to avoid possible stiffness of the muscles the next day.

Wide-ranging applications

Testimonials from patients claim NSD treatments have been effective in increasing mobility and relieving pain associated with a variety of disorders, from arthritis to RSI. Dehn claims patients suffering from post-polio syndromes or strokes have made great improvements. "We don't accept the answer 'You'll have to learn to live with the pain,'" he says. "We give each condition a try and have had amazing results." He reports that one of his patients had very severe migraine coinciding with her monthly cycle. For two to three days she would see everything in blue and have to lie down in a dark room. Though it seemed to be a hormonal problem, after two months of NSD treatment her migraines subsided. The patient told him she still had a monthly headache, but a "nice one", as she called it. "A lot of people are not aware that headaches and migraines can be caused by spinal misalignment," explains Dehn, "but a joint out of place can put a lot of strain on the shoulders and the neck and thereby cause trouble further up."

Shoes off and relax

In a first NSD session, the therapist will check the patient's medical history — including x-rays if available — and their posture. For the treatment to be effective the muscles have to be relaxed. If that's not the case, massage is sometimes combined with neuroskeletal dynamics to loosen up the back. Otherwise patients simply take off their shoes,



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keep their clothes on and lie down on a treatment table, face down, for a 30- to 45-minute treatment.

Most patients will need between two and six treatments. "If it's a recent sports injury, it might be fixed after one session only. Old injuries take longer to heal," says Dehn. There are limits to the treatment, though, if a patient has had surgery where bolts and pins have been inserted into the body. A full recovery is then no longer possible. In general, however, patients will require no further therapy after the treatment has ended, as the body educates itself to maintain the "new" natural position. "If a patient's shoes are too heavily worn from past walking patterns, they should be resoled to avoid slipping back into old habits," says Dehn.

Did Derek ever get back to his yoga? His case involved five sessions and a happier ashtanga devotee at the end of it all: "I immediately noticed my improved flexibility. My back and legs have significantly more elasticity than before my back problems started and soon I was able to perform all my yoga postures better than I had before my trip to the iridologist," Derek reports.

Clinical trials on neuroskeletal dynamics are currently underway at Adelaide University. For more information on NSD contact: Robert Dehn, practitioner in Sydney: www.sydneybackclinic.com.au, Tel: (02) 9388 0700; Kylie Tucker, practitioner presently writing her PhD on NSD: www.backinaction.com.au, Tel: (08) 8234 6900.

What medical people say about NSD:

Dr Clive T Lovell (MB, BS Syd)


"I have known Mr Robert Dehn since July 1999. He is a qualified practitioner of a treatment technique for back pain and disorders of the axial skeleton. I have been very impressed with his success rate with a number of my patients in relieving painful conditions which had previously been resistant to orthodox physiotherapy and medication. In a couple of cases, patients who had been housebound for considerable periods, owing to pain, were restored by a few sessions of NSD treatment to their previous best state — ie full independence with greatly reduced pain. I have been encouraged to recommend his technique to my patients, partly because of the very gentle nature of the physical therapy and manipulation that he employs compared with that used in such techniques as chiropractic and osteopathy; and partly because — although my impression is on an empirical and somewhat anecdotal

basis at this stage — his success rate appears to me to compare very favourably with that of orthodox physiotherapy."


Dr Leonid M Lavrin (specialist physician)

"Application of this technique for the treatment of back problem is unique and very impressive from the success point view and non-invasive method. I, personally, was a very successful patient of NSD. I did refer a number of patients, with very impressive results. This technique has also been used in the treatment of the myalgic component of chronic fatigue syndrome." ☺

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