

Naturopathic Options for Chronic Pain Management

By Dr. Garrett Swetlikoff, ND

Pain is one of the most common conditions that patients seek medical attention for. Pain can be caused by trauma such as motor vehicle accidents and sports injuries, inflammatory and degenerative conditions such as rheumatoid and osteoarthritis, and metabolic conditions such as headaches, cancer and organ disease. There are literally hundreds of illnesses and circumstances that are associated with pain.

Conventional treatment usually consists of analgesics (painkillers), anti-inflammatories, physiotherapy and occasionally surgical intervention. Alternative methods may include massage therapy, chiropractic manipulation, acupuncture, pulsed electromagnetic field therapy, cranial sacral therapy and various supplement-herbal remedies.

Two therapies that most of you have not heard of that are often extremely effective are prolotherapy and neural therapy.

Prolotherapy

Prolotherapy is a technique for treating chronic pain around the joints, tendons, bursae and ligaments of the neck, back or extremities. It involves the injection of a concentrated sugar (dextrose), sterile water and local anaesthetic mixture into the above-mentioned structures, which in turn induces local inflammation. Consequently, there is an increase in growth factors, which in turn stimulate the release of fibroblasts, which are “baby” ligament and connective tissue cells. The fibroblasts lay down new collagen tissue, which in animal and human studies have been shown to shorten, thicken and strengthen the injected ligaments. This causes a decrease in painful signals arising from the many nerves in the lax ligaments and ultimately a decrease in pain. This procedure does not involve the injection of corticosteroids such as Cortisone. This procedure originated in the late 1940's.

Neural Therapy

Neural therapy is a healing technique that was originally developed in Germany. It involves the injection of local anaesthetics, nutrients, homeopathic medicines or some combination of the above into nerves, scars, glands, acupuncture points, trigger points and other tissues.



Neural therapy is based on the theory that trauma (physical or emotional) can produce long-standing disturbances in the electrochemical function of tissues and cells. Such trauma can cause changes in the involuntary nervous system function leading to altered cell membrane dynamics. Also circulatory, lymphatic and connective tissue disruption can occur.

The injection of the local anaesthetic restores cell membrane function for the duration of the anaesthesia. This short period of time allows the cell to eliminate sufficient amounts of waste material to re-establish normal function. Enhanced microcirculation and lymphatic drainage also takes place as a result of the injection. The anaesthetic is not given for the conventional purpose of freezing or numbing the local region.

Examples of a few conditions that respond to neural therapy are fibromyalgia, headaches, sinus congestion, arthritis, gynaecological disorders, stress, whiplash, frozen shoulder and thyroid dysfunction.

As with any medical procedure there is always the risk of complications. However, in the hands of a competent and experienced practitioner, both modalities are safe. When used accordingly, many pain syndromes can be effectively and permanently treated.



Seminar:

To learn more about natural pain management, sign up for Dr. Swetlikoff's seminar on Monday, February 18, 7:00-8:30pm at Choices Markets' Kelowna location. Please see the event calendar in this newsletter for cost and registration details.



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