

The Miracle of Healing: Things I Have Learned

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"And in the same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight." -- Luke 7:21 KJV

As a chiropractor, one of the greatest rewards of practice is having someone get up from the table with a big smile and the comment, "I feel so much better." Sometimes I joke with my patients and say something like, "Well, what did you expect? You didn't come here to feel worse, did you?" All kidding aside, I get a lot of satisfaction from helping people improve their health. The power of chiropractic and the gift of sharing it with others is a privilege we should treasure. The body's ability to heal is pretty miraculous by itself. Chiropractors possess no mystical powers of healing, but we do get to facilitate the body's healing mechanism. However, the reality of practice is that not everyone responds as quickly or as well to our treatment as we would like.

In this high-speed, computer-driven, deadline-oriented world, people are conditioned to expect complete, total healing. They want immediate gratification - and they want it now! We have all seen the commercial for the suffering mom who is trying to get through her day and care for her family, but is staggering through a fog. As soon as she takes this or that medication, the cloud is lifted. You see it right there on the TV. The hazy veil is peeled back and now she is in a world of clear, bright, vibrant color; and she is happy and smiling and carefree. Instantly.

Now, we all know that's not how the body works. That's certainly not how most medications work. But that is what John Q. Public is conditioned to expect. Why would they expect any less from us? After all, aren't we the "natural" guys? We are portrayed as organic health care - all natural, and better for you. So, shouldn't our treatment work just as fast, if not faster?

The reality is that the body's ability to heal itself should be viewed as miraculous. Think about it. If you cut your finger, the cut scabs over and heals. Back in philosophy class, we called that "innate." When you sit back and think about the body's ability to mend itself, you have to admit it is pretty amazing. Of course, there are a lot of factors that come into play when you open this door - the body sometimes needs help to get the healing process on track. A sprained ankle needs rest and ice. A deep cut may need stitches to hold the wound closed. A disc extrusion may very well need surgery [to avoid a cauda equina syndrome](#). If an articulation is not functioning properly, then a specific chiropractic manipulation is indicated. As chiropractic physicians, we have the opportunity to bring the spine into alignment to promote healing and overall improved health.

Two Issues to Consider

1. Healing takes time. Anyone who has ever broken a bone knows this. Many patients come in with expectations of spontaneous healing. That is just not always possible. We can help them feel better - reduce pain, spasm, swelling - but sometimes, we have to let Mother Nature set the timetable.

ankle. He came home the next day with a plate, six screws and a very large cast. I treated him with [manipulation and some specific acupuncture points](#). We were able to get his pain under control very quickly so that he never filled his prescription for Percocet. After two months in the cast and another three months in a walking boot, he was released by the orthopedist. The ortho noted that he had healed uncommonly quickly, with apparently little pain. I think you get my point. I was able to help him a great deal, but it still took time for the natural healing process to progress.

2. Pain relief is not the same as healing. Maybe this should be a corollary to the first point, but it is important to make the clarification. As discussed earlier, most people expect immediate gratification. It is easy to assume that when things feel better, you are better. Anyone who has been in practice for awhile has had the weekend warrior come in with back pain, feel great with one treatment and then come back a few days later and say, "I felt so good after the last treatment that I went home and raked leaves over the weekend, and now my back is killing me. What did you do?" It was assumed that since he felt better with one treatment, he was all better, and he ended up overworking the back and exacerbating the compromised muscles. Be aware that just because we help someone feel better doesn't mean they are all better; and make sure they know that as well. Complete healing takes time.

Moral to the Story

What is to be learned from all this? [Talk to your patients](#). Explain their specific condition and what your plan of care is. I often tell patients my first job is to help them feel better; then I can work on fixing the problem so the pain doesn't come back. Make it clear during your consultation that you are working to get them out of pain, but that there is care beyond just pain relief. Be sure to explain why. This gives you credibility with the patient and prevents inappropriate expectations.

It is a great feeling to help someone along the path to health and healing. Make sure your patients know that you working to meet their needs. When they recognize what you have done for them, they will thank you for your quality care. As always, be known for offering the highest level of patient care; don't settle for anything less.

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