

Health Update: Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia and Long-term Drug Use- Are There Alternatives?

Most patients with the severe pains of fibromyalgia consult medical doctors for help. Although many patients use chiropractors and other alternative approaches, most continue to use analgesics (pain medications) to get through the day.

These drugs come in a wide variety and help with varying degrees of success, but all will have unintended side effects, especially when taken over many years. Some patients have wanted to escape this pain-pill-pain-pill cycle are looking for more healthy and natural choices to manage their pain.

Doctors and scientists too are responding to their demands of the public and have focused their efforts and trying to get patients to decrease their use of medications.

Researchers from the Mayo Clinic (Pain Med Jan-Feb, 2007) studied 159 patients for three weeks in an outpatient program while they attempted to withdraw their medications. The fibromyalgia patients were taking opioid analgesics, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), benzodiazepines, and muscle relaxants. In addition to measuring how many drugs and the quantity over the three weeks, the scientists also measured the patients' quality of life and psychological wellbeing.

The results of this analgesic-withdrawal program were dramatic. Patients had significant reduction in their medication use and at the same time, their physical and emotional wellbeing also significantly improved.

Chiropractic care does not involve the prescription of pain medications. Our care begins with a comprehensive examination including tests of spinal mobility and function. We take a detailed history to make sure your diagnosis is correct and that we have a solid baseline to compare how well you do over time. Many patients will have x-rays take to more precisely measure abnormal vertebral displacements.

The care approach for the fibromyalgia patient incorporates specific adjustments to counter spinal distortions (poor posture), and limited mobility. At the same time we will try to promote a healthy lifestyle for you consisting of regular exercises, stretching, and a nutritious and balanced diet. This comprehensive natural approach is much different from typical medical treatments. Although there is limited research as to how helpful these natural alternatives are, it is clear they do not carry the unintended side effects of long-term medication use. The researchers at the Mayo Clinic have now provided some evidence that, if a patient chooses, they may be able to decrease some of the medications they are currently taking.

If you would like to discuss your health concerns with a doctor of chiropractic, our in-person and phone consultations are always complementary. You may call (831) 475-8600 to schedule an appointment.

If you have a health concern or want to know what are the best approaches for tackling this difficult problem and need to schedule an appointment for a consultation, call 475-8600.