

## **Network Care** **- A Wellness Approach to Chiropractic** *by Drs Ari Diskin and Travis Wild, Doctors of Chiropractic.*

**Network Care is a contemporary form of chiropractic that has, quite literally, been making waves since it was first developed over 20 years ago. Using precise and gentle touches, it engages a person's brain to assess its own tension and stress patterns.**

### **Network Care**

The methods used by Network Care practitioners cause the body to produce visible waves that travel throughout the body releasing tension and stored information. The typical result is a person feeling more flexible and at ease, breathing more freely, coping with stress better and having a dramatically enhanced experience of life.

### **Development**

Network Care represents a significant paradigm shift in the practice of Chiropractic. In the 1970's and early '80's Dr Donald Epstein, an American chiropractor, decided to combine his passion for the original principles of chiropractic with a growing awareness of ancient and emerging healing practices such as Tai Chi, Qi-Gong and Ayurveda.

Instead of pushing on 'stuck' spinal joints (those with limited movement or a large amount of stored energy), he experimented with placing his attention on those that were already working. He held gentle touches on spinal segments that seemed to be moving freely, that were undefended and, he postulated, had a greater capacity to perceive input. His intention focused on working with the body's natural rhythms and intelligence instead of trying to fight or oppose them.

The results were unprecedented. Most obvious in the beginning were large spontaneous body movements (wriggling, twisting and stretching) and releases of emotion. More impressive were the results his patients began to report; dramatically reduced physical symptoms, aches and pains and improved organ function. They also reported feeling more free and at ease in themselves, more self-confident and expressive, coping with stress better and having a much clearer experience of their body and their feelings.

His practice became highly sought after and over the following decades he refined his methods which have been embraced by chiropractors, into a precise system known as Network Spinal Analysis (NSA) or 'Network Care'.

### **Research**

Network Care has had some of the largest studies ever performed into the effectiveness of chiropractic. Because of its diverse range of reported benefits, it has also prompted the development of dramatically different ways to research and measure 'wellness'.

One study conducted by senior researchers at the University of California assessed over 2,800 people under Network Care. The results showed that people experienced benefits such as greater energy, improved flexibility, reduced symptoms and pain, greater capacity to cope with stress, improved mental clarity and performance, higher productivity, greater ability to adapt to change, increased self-confidence and satisfaction with self, work and life.

The benefits from care were measurable from as early as one month and they continued over time appearing to have no upper limit, meaning that people continued to improve as long as they continued care. This makes Network Care a true 'wellness care' as compared to

orthodox medicine and some natural health care practices which seek only to restore a person to a non-symptomatic state.

In comparing the effectiveness of Network Care with other healthy lifestyle practices such as meditation, yoga, eating well and minimizing toxic behaviours (e.g. smoking), research showed that Network Care improves quality of life more than twice as much as all of the other healthy lifestyle practices combined.

### **Constructing Defence**

The human body responds to the world around us – physically, mentally and emotionally. When we experience stress in its many forms, our bodies respond primarily by building tension in an effort to protect our vital body and brain functions. The best known of these stress responses is called the ‘fright flight’ response. ‘Hardwired’ into the primitive reptilian part of our brain are finely tuned survival reflexes. In times of mental or emotional stress, our body shifts into survival mode. Muscles tighten, blood flow and energy are diverted from normal function into your heart and muscles and adrenalin puts the brain on high alert. These responses (plus many more) are signs your body is preparing itself to either run away or ‘fight’.

An important part of these responses is that they also help us cope with the emotional content and information associated with the stress. Times of stress may not be the best time to fully feel or express emotion. For example, if you’ve had a nasty car accident or your house has caught on fire, a great survival tactic is to ‘bottle up’ the feelings. We want to be able to think rationally and react quickly in these times, rather than have the confusion or distraction of our emotions. Our body and brain do us a big favour by disconnecting from the emotions and storing them for us to deal with later.

In this way we construct our defence patterns. As humans we ‘bottle up’ feelings in times of great stress as well as seemingly small stresses, when emotions feel overwhelming or when we need to ‘keep things together’. As these tensions build up in ‘layers’, we develop patterns of reacting to even minimal stress with the same defensiveness. Over time, this has significant ramifications physically, physiologically, mentally, emotionally and energetically.

As tension builds up in our body, our organs can shift their function towards survival mode (increased adrenalin production, reduced blood flow to the digestive tract, increased blood pressure, etc.).

Our ability to feel and express emotion becomes restricted and we find ourselves reacting out of past stresses to every new stress that comes along.

When stress and defensive patterning reach the point where we can’t absorb any more, even a minimal stress can be enough to send you into overwhelm. This is when pain or other symptoms often begin to surface.

### **How Network Works**

For those beginning Network Care the lightness of the touch used on key areas of the spine can often be surprising. The effectiveness of these touches is similar to the way your body responds to being lightly tickled. Usually, the more specific (and gentle) the touch, the more responsive the result.

These contacts are applied to points along your spine and body that ‘melt’ when you touch them. Undefended, they are able to perceive sensory input quite clearly and when you apply a light touch to them your brain recognizes it like a gentle but powerful wake-up call.

As a result, your brain is instantly alerted to the surrounding tension. This reconnects the stored defensive tension patterns together with any information that may be contained within it. Now that your brain is re-engaged with the defensive pattern, it can begin to release and integrate the stored tension and information. As it does so, ‘waves’ of dissipation are formed along the spine and body, like ripples on a pond. Your body begins to breathe more deeply and the desire to stretch is often felt. Your defensive patterning begins to melt.

As you progress through care, your body releases tension. Previously solid, rigidly defended regions begin to move freely. Your body moves more, in increasingly coordinated ways. Continuing through care, your body learns more about how to recognise and transform the energy of stress and defensiveness into fuel for further opening and growth.

### **A Life More Free**

As we ‘disassemble’ and integrate our defensive patterning we begin to experience life very differently. Physically we become more flexible and many aches and pains drop away. Physiologically our body functions are able to restore themselves to their ‘healthy living’ function rather than being trapped in survival mode. We rest more easily, digest and assimilate foods better; our metabolism normalises.

As the baggage of past stresses melts away we begin to perceive the world more clearly. We feel freer emotionally, having a greater depth of experience and range of emotional expression. We assert ourselves more and are less troubled by people, situations and events that previously may have been very stressful.

Free of the limitations from past stresses we begin to experience a sense of possibility that many of us have not felt since childhood. We often feel more centred and aware of our authentic strength, power, value and love.

### **Starting Network Care**

Before beginning care, consultation time will be spent with the Network Care practitioner to determine your needs and objectives. Most practitioners begin by taking a detailed history of your health, wellbeing and other relevant life experiences. They will then typically do a physical assessment and explain their findings to you.

This includes observations about areas of stored tension and stress response patterns in the body. Your practitioner will give you a clear and detailed explanation of what care will involve and the sort of benefits you could expect.

Your practitioner will then recommend an initial program of care that will include opportunities for reassessment to discuss your progress and options for continued care. Most practitioners complete progress reviews roughly each eight weeks, although this may vary according to individual circumstances. Progress reviews are based on an outcomes assessment approach that combines your self-reported changes with the practitioner’s clinical assessment. The recommended frequency of care for optimum results and progress is three times per week for level one, twice per week for level two, and once per week for level three. Of course, consideration has to be taken into account varying these recommendations up or down, depending on individual objectives.

The gentle and flexible approach of Network Care makes it suitable for people of all ages, from newborns to seniors.

### **A Gentle Touch**

During each session you will typically lie on a table (similar to a traditional chiropractic adjusting or massage table). Your practitioner will determine, through observation of your body’s patterns of muscular tension, breathing rhythm and a host of other parameters, which of the five ‘phases’ (established patterns) your body is in, to identify your needs for that session.

A number of factors contribute to the effectiveness of this technique, including the location of the touch, specificity, amount of pressure, direction of touch, timing (when), duration (how long), setting (where) and the environment (sound, comfort, and general surroundings).

## Creating Waves

Two unique responses with Network Care are the two spinal oscillation waves. The first is called a Respiratory Wave, which looks like a wave going through the spine as your body releases tension. You may sense it, and often feel a sigh of relief as it passes through your body.

The second is referred to as a Somato-Psychic Wave, which occurs as you advance in care, usually in level two. This wave is a transformational movement, which is a pattern-changing phenomenon. These waves have not been demonstrated in any other setting, and have actually been measured in scientific laboratories, having mathematic properties that are predictable as seen and recorded through computerised EMG scanning. It's these waves travelling along your spine and throughout your body that help to 'melt' your defensive patterning.

The sensation of these waves is similar to a yawn or the desire to stretch. It feels like the desire just appears and feels comfortable to 'go with it'. As your body's movements become more synchronised and harmonious they 'entrain' with your body's natural rhythm and cycles. It's for this reason that each session is called an 'entrainment'.

## Levels of Care

Network Care is structured in three levels that build on each other. The first level of care is called "Basic Care". The primary objective of this level is to help your brain locate and connect with the stored tension and release it. These releases may be obvious or happen on a more subtle level. You may experience physical releases and body movements such as twitching, stretching or wriggling. You may also experience more emotional releases such as laughing or crying, or you may find your body 'cleaning house' and detoxing. Physical pain often eases substantially during this first level and many people notice a sense of relief or change.

The second level of care is called "Intermediate Care". This level is directed at releasing the deeper layers of stored tension in the body. Now that your body has developed strategies for releasing its stored tension, you can use (in fact build up more tension) and redirect that energy constructively to change or transform old patterns. It's like a sailor harnessing the wind and redirecting it to go wherever they want to go. This level is aimed at refining your ability to adapt to stress and life differently. People find they begin to respond in life rather than reacting out of built-up defences.

The third level of care is called "Advanced Care". This level is about growing, evolving and expanding your connection with yourself, others and your external environment. You gain a deeper awareness of your self, and experience greater flexibility and adaptability.

As you advance through the levels of care in sequence, the cycle of healing progresses and you experience connecting, releasing, transforming, refining, evolving, and repeating this cycle with increasing efficiency, spontaneity, independence and ease.

## Practitioner Training

All Network Care practitioners complete a rigorous chiropractic tertiary degree course, equivalent in length and majority of content to a medical practitioner's course of study. In addition, Network Care practitioners attend many postgraduate seminars covering the scientific concepts and hands on training over a number of years before practicing this type of care.