

Standard scoliosis treatment challenged by research

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Author: Nathan Phelps

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nphelps@greenbaypressgazette.com

The Green Bay Press-Gazette talks with people from a variety of business disciplines each week in its Saturday conversation feature.

This week we talk with Dr. Brian Dovorany, chiropractor with Posture and Spine Care Center in Green Bay. Dovorany recently lectured in the United Kingdom on scoliosis therapy developed by the Chiropractic Leadership, Educational Advancement & Research Institute.

Q. Can you talk a little about how your medical career led you to focusing on scoliosis therapy and your association with the Chiropractic Leadership, Educational Advancement & Research Institute?

A. I have always focused on spinal rehabilitation and correcting poor posture with patients. I did some formal training with Dr. Dennis Woggon, the founder of the CLEAR Institute, and I interned with him in 1997 before I started my own private practice.

In 2006, a colleague of mine asked if I wanted to fly to Texas and attend a postgraduate training session regarding scoliosis. Scoliosis has always fascinated me because of my spinal-engineering background. It all kind of snowballed from there.

I met with Dr. Woggon and a couple other doctors who were working with scoliosis and looked at the results they were achieving and decided to explore this program a bit further.

I attended four additional training sessions held by CLEAR at Parker College in Dallas. I was very passionate about this program and remodeled my clinic, purchased all of the required equipment for scoliosis care, and achieved full intensive certification.

Shortly after I fully engaged in scoliosis care, I was elected to the board for the CLEAR nonprofit organization and then became chair of the doctor educational committee. I now travel worldwide and teach and lecture for CLEAR

In addition, I am responsible for doctor certification and evaluating cases from other clinics internationally.

Q. What kinds of changes or trends have you and the profession seen in scoliosis treatment and detection in recent years?

A. I have seen a much stronger desire for a proactive approach, especially when the scoliosis curves are smaller. The current medical model for scoliosis treatment has been in place for decades and is finally being challenged through research and statistical data regarding the effectiveness of bracing and surgery.

The fact is that not much has changed. A child diagnosed with spinal curvature is essentially told it will be monitored, with no treatment, from 10 to 25 degrees.

Once it approaches the 20- to 25-degree mark, generally, a rigid brace is prescribed, which a child is instructed to wear 23 hours a day until skeletal maturity (usually 16-18 years old), or until the curve progresses to 40 degrees.

When it reaches 40 degrees, surgical intervention is recommended, where they fuse a large portion of the spinal column.

Through my experience working with larger scoliotic curvatures, it has become obvious that an early intervention program is long overdue. By treating curvatures when they are first diagnosed and when the spine is more flexible, it allows the parents and patients to potentially avoid bracing and surgery completely.

Not all cases will respond to a rehabilitation-based program, but it is certainly worth a shot. The detection process is still a challenge because most parents and school nurses don't know what to look for, and the Adam's test (forward bending) is often unable to pick up spinal curvatures under 20 degrees.

As far as new technology, we offer the Scoliscore AIS prognostic test. This saliva-collection test can compare the patient's genetic predisposition against 53 known genetic markers to produce a high-, intermediate-, or low-risk determination of the curvature, progressing to the point where surgical intervention is necessary.

There are certain visible postural changes that can aid in early detection. For more information visit www.treating scoliosis.com.

Q.In layman's terms, can you talk briefly about the treatment developed by the CLEAR Institute and the need it fills within scoliosis treatment?

A.The CLEAR scoliosis treatment program combines several different philosophies, not just chiropractic. The core principles are based on an overall understanding that scoliosis is primarily a neurological-based disease; that the body is not relating to gravity effectively and is trying to restore balance by creating curvature.

This program uses what is referred to as the MIX, FIX, SET model of care.

MIX involves softening the spine and creating flexibility, especially on the inside of the curvature where ligaments become tighter, resisting correction. By applying cyclical motion, traction and de-rotation, the ligaments heat up and elongate, creating less resistance to change.

FIX procedures involve gentle precise adjustments to the spinal bones and joints, where accuracy is based on detailed analysis of the X-rays.

The SET procedures are where the major breakthroughs have occurred.

The scoliosis traction chair combines traction, de-rotation and whole body vibration to effectively untwist the spine while the patient performs exercises. Unlike spinal bracing, where spinal muscles tend to get weaker, the chair actually strengthens and engages the core muscles.

We also use re-active care, where specific body weights cause the body to react and contract muscles that help reposition and relearn a new alignment.

The patients also are able to use the chair and exercises at home to ensure the new position stays.

The CLEAR method provides patients with an effective nonbracing, nonsurgical treatment option that actually reduces the size of spinal curvature as well as providing visible body posture improvements, which is groundbreaking.

Q.You recently traveled to the United Kingdom for a lecture on the CLEAR treatment. As I understand it, you travel frequently internationally for the Clear Institute. What has been the outcome of that trip to the United Kingdom and other trips worldwide? What is the need and ultimate goal for taking this treatment to doctors worldwide?

A.By sharing ideas and results with doctors and students in other countries, it creates awareness and helps to build bridges to those countries, and eventually to the patients in those countries who are affected by scoliosis.

The fact is that CLEAR as an organization is in its infancy and needs to grow. What we are doing is groundbreaking, and doctors from other countries want to know what we are doing. We have a global vision to allow access to non-invasive scoliosis care worldwide, and for that dream to come true doctors who hold higher positions within the organization have to spread the word.

The challenges facing other countries are different from the ones facing our country. In the United Kingdom, they have national health care, which generally prevents new treatment from getting under the health-care umbrella for a longer period of time, where most insurance companies in the United States cover this care program.

The thing that I see with national health care is that early intervention is very interesting to them because it saves the government program money, whereas proactive solutions that save our health-care industry money tend to be less available. There is a good chance that CLEAR will have several clinics internationally within the next few years.

Q.What have you been able to bring back to both CLEAR and your own practice from interaction with doctors and patients around the world?

A.As far as for my patients locally, you can never know enough, and through experience and education I can offer them change and adaptation to advances in scoliosis treatment. I think that by traveling and teaching I have become very progressive. If I see someone doing a better job, then I immediately have it available to my patients.

Q.In general, do treatment methods vary around the world? What are some of the more extreme?

A.Scoliosis treatments have varied greatly over the course of history, but currently most of the world has adopted the same bracing/surgical protocols as the United States. Personally, I think the current practice of having metal titanium rods fused to your spine is the most extreme treatment method I have seen.

Background: Bachelor's degree in pre-medical sciences from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, doctorate in chiropractic from Palmer College in Iowa, advanced post-graduate training in spinal engineering, rehabilitation and scoliosis from Parker College in Dallas.