

Scoliosis Correction: Independent of Age

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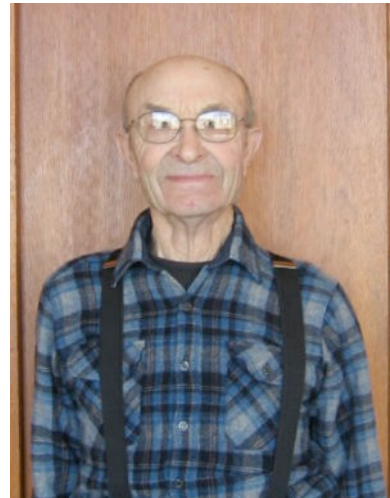
Project Choice: Interviewing Marvin, an 83 year young male with scoliosis who has been undergoing scoliosis corrective care at CLEAR Institute for 1 year.
Interview Site: PCCF downstairs office with a speaker phone

Scoliosis Correction: Independent of Age

Chiropractors have always been fascinated by abnormal curvatures of the spine and have sought to treat the cause through the adjustment. There is a recent trend emerging in regards to how chiropractic care can address the faulty biomechanics of scoliosis and show significant decrease in the Cobb angle. Typically scoliosis is identified in adolescent patients and addressed early on since their bodies are still growing and adapting to their environment. These younger patients respond well to chiropractic care (adjustments and rehabilitation) and are able to become active participants in their care and not prisoners of their brace.

But scoliosis does not discriminate. Scoliosis may be diagnosed more frequently in the adolescent population but that does not mean that scoliosis is not present in the geriatric population. Is a geriatric scoliosis a lost cause? Once you throw an osteoporotic, scoliotic spine into the mix, many doctors are quick to refer out to orthopedic surgeons out of fear of doing further damage to their patient. But does this mean that we cannot correct scoliosis in a geriatric patient?

On Thursday, February 15th we had the pleasure of interviewing Marvin who is 83 years young. Almost a year ago, Marvin underwent care at CLEAR Institute (Chiropractic Leadership, Educational Advancement, and Research), a chiropractic research clinic dedicated purely to scoliosis correction founded by Dr. Dennis Woggon. The CLEAR protocol of treating scoliosis includes a Mix, Fix, and Set. Mixing the spine up loosens up tight ligaments and brings the discs to a more gel state to allow for correction. Fixing the spine occurs through chiropractic adjustments. Setting the spine helps it to hold its new position. Each of these steps — mix, fix, and set — is done on each visit, is very involved, and time consuming. At CLEAR the average scoliosis patient's appointment lasts ~2 hours, so as you can see this is no easy undertaking for Marvin. Here is his story.



Kristin: “Hi Marvin, this is Kristin.

Marvin: “Hi”

Kristin: “I feel like you’re a rock star. You’re a legend for Dr. Woggon!”

Kristin: “The first thing I want to ask is how old are you?”

Marvin: “Oh! Easy there.”

Kristin: “I just wanted to get an idea so we could tell our class that people of all ages can undergo chiropractic care.”

Marvin: “Uh huh . . . Well, I guess I’m the oldest patient he’s ever had.”

Kristin: “You’re in your eighties, correct?” [Marvin is 83.]

Marvin: “Yeah”

Kristin: "Can you tell us a little about your scoliosis treatment before you underwent treatment at CLEAR Institute with Dr. Woggon?"

Marvin: "Well, basically I was not doing anything. I went over to Mayo Clinic . . . , and there was no help. That's as much as they told us. I went to different chiropractors around, but none of them really got into the helpful part of this. They just tried a little and that was it."

Kristin: "How old were you when they caught your scoliosis?"

Marvin: "Oh, it must have been almost 20 years ago. The way that came about was in the fall I was out raking the yard and my back was hurting so terribly that I went to the doctor. He x-rayed and I came back home and . . . continued working. He called and said off your feet and off your seat (laughs), in other words on my back. That was the beginning of it. Ever since it's been getting worse I guess."

Kristin: "Did you ever consider seeing an orthopedic surgeon?"

Marvin: "Not really, I've had far too many surgeries, and different reports we've heard about this back surgery and the rod and all have not been very good."

Kristin: "Did you ever wear a brace?"

Marvin: "Not really, no."

Kristin: "What obstacles did your scoliosis cause you to face before you started treatment? I know you had back pain while you were raking. Was there anything else, muscle pain, or any emotional parts that was difficult for you?"

Marvin: "Well definitely, it was difficult to face the aging process. (But I thought) I guess I'll be with my body as I keep working and suffer with pain."

Kristin: "Did you have any difficulty sleeping or any digestive problems?"

Marvin: "Not that I can blame for that, no."

Kristin: "What made you want to go to a chiropractor first for your scoliosis care?"

Marvin: "Years ago we were practically against chiropractors, and then when we found out there was no help at Mayo Clinic we realized we had to start approaching different avenues. That's when we first started turning to chiropractors."

Kristin: "How did you hear about Dr. Woggon?"

Marvin: "Through another chiropractor."

Kristin: "How long have you been seeing Dr. Woggon?"

Marvin: "A little over a year now."

Kristin: "Can I ask what surgeries you have had in the past?"

Marvin: "Oh, I've had double hernia surgery twice, right shoulder replacement, prostate cancer removal, I can't forget I had my neck broken and there was of course an operation for that."

Kristin: "Were you in a brace for that?"

Marvin: "You bet. You know the halo brace that screws on the head."

Kristin: “Yeah”

Kristin: “How are you doing today, you sound like you’re active and doing a lot of stuff?”

Marvin: “Quite well for all I’ve been through and for my age I think I’m doing quite well.”

Kristin: “Can you tell me a little bit about what a typical dinner or lunch is for you?”

Marvin: “For dinner we usually have a large salad, a real large one I mean, a veggie, and a meat. Breakfast usually oatmeal, fruit, or juice. And lunch is kind of pick up.”

Kristin: “Do you think you’ve always eaten a pretty balanced diet, or is that something you’ve developed as you’ve gotten older?”

Marvin: “My mother started out always on lots of vegetables. She canned a lot of stuff out of the garden. I’ve always been a vegetable lover.”

Kristin: “Are there any exercises that you do at home that Dr. Woggon gave you?”

Marvin: “Oh boy, you don’t want the long list!”

Kristin: “Are you wearing the head weights?”

Marvin: “Yes, wearing the head weights and doing some neck bending exercises. A lot of it is neck exercises because my head. I’ve got the forward head posture so much. Foot weights lifting. Oh, I don’t know it just goes on and on. It takes me a long time I know that.”

Kristin: “You do not currently use the scoliosis chair at home; you just use it when you’re at the clinic?”

Marvin: “Correct. I’ve been advised that I should get one, but I have not. Neither myself nor my wife are on any prescription medicines. We do take a lot of nutritional supplements so maybe that’s a contribution to our good health.”



Kristin: “I had some fears before I went to Dr. Woggon’s clinic to be worked on. Did you have any fears or concerns before you went to Dr. Woggon’s or once you saw some of the equipment you’d be strapped into?”

Marvin: “None whatsoever, no.”

Marvin in the Scoliosis Traction Chair

Kristin: “What do you contribute that to, Dr. Woggon talking to you and explaining the whole process to you?”

Marvin: “Well, I think mostly that I needed help, and I was willing to try most anything. When I went there he said there were 4 stages of scoliosis and you’re in the third one and the next one is wheel chair.”

Kristin: “What was the hardest part of your treatment?”

Marvin: “I don’t know if I considered any of them really hard.”

Kristin: “What impact has your chiropractic treatment had on you and your family?”

Marvin: “Well, they were all in favor of it. I want to continue getting better if I can, so that’s

why I'm willing to make the 135 mile trip we make up there every 2 weeks, and you have to be a little dedicated to do that."

Kristin: "I think so!"

Kristin: "We're going to be making a presentation to our class, and they haven't heard a lot about how chiropractic care can help scoliosis. What message do you have for older patients with scoliosis?"

Marvin: "Well, I guess, from my standpoint, you're never too old to try to get help."

Kristin: "That's very well stated."

Michelle: "I just wanted to ask you, and I know Kristin kind of touched on it . . ."

Marvin: "This is going to be like a cross examination!"

Michelle: "How are you doing now vs. when you first started care with Dr. Woggon? What improvements or changes have you seen? I know you've got the changes on your x-rays, but what have you noticed?"



January 2006

March 2006

October 2006

March 2007

Marvin: "Well, I've got age against me of course, so even if I'm getting better one way I'm aging. So I think I'm holding my own lets say."

Michelle: "Thank you so much Marvin for taking the time to talk to us. I hope it [class project] gets the word out to people that you can treat scoliosis at any age and that chiropractic *can* help it if you do the right things.

Marvin: ". . .When I was gone on vacation last fall when I got back I had gone down hill. I told him when I was gone how I was too busy and I didn't do my therapy like I should have. He said he could tell. This was one of the things he has so much trouble with especially with young people. They won't do there therapy. So that's very important."

Michelle: "Yeah, it is definety very important."

Marvin: "You have to be dedicated otherwise you aren't going to get help."

Michelle: "I like that it put's the patients health care back in their own hands, that they have some control over it."

Michelle: "Is there anything else you want to ask us?"

Kristin: “You can cross examine us!”

Marvin: “No not really, but I’ll say it’s been a pleasure talking to you, and I hope that anything I’ve said has been helpful.”

(Kristin asked the questions previously agreed upon questions & Michelle typed.)

Scoliosis tends to get the reputation that it is a childhood disease and after hearing Marvin’s story this is clearly not the case. We need to address scoliosis in all ages and not be fearful of addressing structural changes in the geriatric spine. Marvin believes that Dr. Woggon saved his life by being the first person to address his scoliosis and save him from serving the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Marvin calls Dr. Woggon his “hero” and in response, Dr. Woggon always replies that Marvin is his hero.

After speaking with Marvin, we are both moved and inspired by his story. We are often disheartened when instructors inform us that chiropractic cannot do much for scoliosis except for address symptomatic care in adolescents. We hope that our project serves to inspire not only us to treat geriatric spines, but also our classmates and colleagues. We hope they know that they have the power to correct scoliosis through chiropractic care and rehabilitation. We feel chiropractors need to look at the spine globally in addition to a patient’s individual subluxations. Scoliosis is not something that should be ignored nor taken lightly. It requires the attention of a doctor who is willing to put their heart into their care and inspire their patient to become an active participant.