

The Holistic Treatment of Pain

Pain has many causes and manifestations. Chinese Medicine identifies twelve causes that perpetuate pain syndromes. These are summed up by descriptions of excess and deficiency. Excess types describe accumulations of some kind of pathological substance which should not be present; such as inflammatory, toxic chemistry. The excess may also be energetic accumulations of protons or ions that disturb proper musculo-skeletal function. Deficiency types are described as not enough supportive nutritive chemistry, or energy. Both types may involve a lack of proper circulation, or intercellular exchange of micronutrients or energy. Musculo-skeletal function is dependant on many other tissues such fascia, a type of connective tissue that structurally supports every anatomical aspect of the body. Musculo skeletal function is also dependent on ligaments, tendons, musculotendinous junctions, periosteum and cutaneous tissue. Fascia is found around all these structures and also supports internal organs. It regulates chemistry, circulation, energy and pressure forces to all associated anatomy. Successful treatment depends on proper identification of all these components, and then a strategy that addresses the specific types of imbalances, thus returning the body to a state of balance.

When these processes become imbalanced they will cause a variety of symptoms, including pain that can refer from one region to another. This can also affect the region of the referral, secondarily to the origination of the disturbance. Often this pain referral pattern can be reproduced, or further elicited by pressing on a small region of a specific structure. These points were named trigger points by Janet Travel who contributed volumes research (published in 1942) and clinical studies to what is now known as myofascial treatment. She is also known for developing innovative treatment protocols such as spray and stretch and trigger point injections. Spray and stretch technique employs a very cold substance (one that evaporates very quickly,) that is sprayed along an entire muscle pain pattern. This distracts the C-nerve fibers from their pain signal and allowing the muscle to be stretched and relaxed back to its' proper length. Trigger point injections infuse a trigger point with saline and other nutrients that support proper chemistry. The Chinese physicians are noted for elaborate systematic identification of points that can be treated in a variety of ways; pressing, needling, stretching, vibrating, manipulating, such that great restoration of function is achieved. A German physician in 1843 identified what he termed muscle callus, a hardening of nodules or bands that offered the patient relief when treated.

These musculoskeletal imbalances can cause the muscle, or more accurately, parts of the muscle, to contract, lose range of motion which can profoundly alter the health of joints, proper joint function, including the spine and pelvis, as well as other associated joints. Compromised joints will be painfully affected and after prolonged dysfunction can undergo degeneration, arthritis, bursitis and other common ailments. The compromised muscle may also become weakened and or trap nerves which will also create pain and compromise musculo-skeletal actions and integrity.

The key components to treating are proper identification of precipitating and perpetuating factors. This includes proper intake of subjective information and patient history, as well as objective information by range of motion, orthopedic testing, and postural analysis, strength testing, and often blood chemistry to identify excesses and deficiencies. Then employing appropriate treatment that addresses that patients individual needs.