I need a doctor! What kind?

Description

Gentle Reader,

If you suffered trauma to your back, perhaps you would turn to a traditional medical practitioner. An orthopedist, a neurologist, at least your primary care physician. Surely, a medical problem like an excruciating pain in the lower back and the inability to walk unaided would send one to a regular doctor. I chose a chiropractor. Let me explain.

I grew up in a medical household. My father was an orthopedic surgeon and my mother, a nurse. After the Second World War, my father relocated us New York City people to Oklahoma. He wanted to start fresh and chose to do a year of specialty study with his fellow Naval officer, a professor at the University of Oklahoma Medical School. I was 10 years old when we moved to Muskogee, OK. It was 1947, only 40 years since statehood. The leading bone doctor in town had established himself during Indian Territory days.

I spent my summer evenings with my father, sitting on the hood of our station wagon watching rodeo riders crashing off bulls into the dust; stock car race drivers roaring into the barricades and each other; football players carried off on stretchers. He was waiting for the next injury, getting his Bone and Joint practice going. Youthful bodies he could put back together. A bone carpenter at work.

Back trouble was another thing. “People with back aches are no good malingering bums,” he would say. I now had back pain, unbelievably debilitating. As a high school student, I scrubbed in with him as he performed lumbar laminectomy surgery. I heard the stories of lengthy rehabilitation, set backs, never working again. Was my youthful athleticism going to end at age 42?

Our family lives in Seattle. I worked for a multi-national telecommunication company in outside sales. The office talk about stress often included reference to a chiropractor and the help she gives to tense neck and back pain. Three years earlier, on the eve of my daughter’s wedding, she woke up with a neck so tense she could not move it from side to side. On the advice of my co-workers, I decided to take her to a chiropractor. I embarrassed my daughter by grilling the doctor about the treatment she was about to

perform. I could hear my father's voice "charlatan, fraud" ringing in my ears. I was terrified. In 1986 neither Wikipedia, nor Google search engine was available. I wanted to learn more about the practice of chiropractic medicine. Briefly, chiropractic emphasizes diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system, especially the spine. The hands-on manipulation of my daughter's neck was successful.



The day after my angry early morning exercise session with Jack LaLanne and horrendous thrust of disc into the spinal nerve, Don drove me to my chiropractor. I knew her through my business-networking group. She had never treated me, but many in the group said wonderful things about her. The massage therapist who helped calm my muscles and spasms enough so I could get out of bed and into a car, referred clients to her. That visit and several more got me on my feet again.

Next steps: my chiropractor sent me to a physical therapist and to the leading sports medicine neurologist for the University of Washington Huskies. The physical therapist wired my thigh muscles, put me on a stationery bike and measured the power output. The left side functioned at about 75% capacity compared to the right. I had no reflex when they tapped below the left kneecap. The nerve down the shin was dead. No movement was comfortable, fluid, exhilarating. Were my running days over? Would I head for the mountains with a pack on my back again? What about the trip my daughters and I dreamed of, circumnavigating Mt. Rainier, the 95-mile Wonderland Trail?

Looking at my MRI results, my neurologist said my bones were not strong enough ordense enough for a laminectomy to be helpful. I had to build a strong structure of musclesto support the weaker skeletal frame. He suggested Feldenkrais.

What is Feldenkrais? Stay tuned for the process that taught me how to lie, sit, stand, walk and transition in and out of each of these positions and actions.

Tell me about your encounters with chiropractors? How did you come to embrace alternative medical practices? If you have not tried alternative healing methods, why not? Until next week,

Be well, Do well and Keep Moving!

Betsy

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