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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

What is a Subluxation?

What is a "subluxation"? This is a question that is not easily answered. Although the medical profession may have a completely different definition for a subluxation, this does not mean one is correct and the other is wrong. For this article, I will be discussing what a "chiropractic subluxation" is. To make this simple, I will explain what exactly a chiropractic subluxation is by using an actual patient -we will call "Mr. Smith".

Mr. Smith came into our office with acute low back pain after cutting up and hauling away a large pine tree that fell in his yard last week during that amazing windstorm. It was quickly determined that the joints and muscles in his low back were the source of his pain. It was then explained to him that to fix his problem, I would not be "cracking the bones" or "putting the bones back into place". Although some patients describe their chiropractic treatments in this manner, bones do not go "out of place" and they are not being "cracked". What Mr. Smith had was a "chiropractic subluxation" in his lower back.

A "subluxation" is really just a term to describe what is happening when a joint in the body, particularly in the spine, is not working properly. In the case of Mr. Smith, he had an accumulation of four problems that as a group caused him some serious pain. His scenario, and most people that enter our office for low back pain, is a combination of the following:

The first problem was a lack of "movement" or "mobility" in the joints of Mr. Smith's low back. He had sprained or irritated joints in his back that became very "stiff or restricted" in their movement. In extreme cases, the joints may even become "locked" in a certain position.

The second problem was a "pinching or irritation" of one or more of the nerves exiting the spine. These nerves control pain sensation, skin sensation, muscle activity, and contribute to the control of many internal organs. Each nerve exits from the spinal cord and passes between each of the vertebrae or bones of the spine. When a joint or its surrounding soft tissues is inflamed or are not functioning properly, the nerves can be irritated. There may be a physical

pinching of the nerve or even just a chemical irritation from the swelling around the joint.

The third problem Mr. Smith had was “muscle spasm”. When the nerves exiting his spine passed by the injured and inflamed joints, they became irritated and functioned in a hyperactive state. These overactive nerves control the muscles in his back and; therefore, they told the muscles to contract hard or go into spasm. All of these muscles attach to the bones or vertebrae of his back. Therefore, as the muscles became tighter, even less movement or mobility of the joints was possible. This compounded his overall problem even further.

The fourth problem was the “swelling or inflammation” in and around Mr. Smith’s injured joint. Think of Mr. Smith’s sprained low back joint as a little mechanical pump, just like the fuel pump on your car. The more it is able to move, the better it will be able to “pump” the swelling out of the joint. When Mr. Smith’s back has very tight muscles and stiff joints, the ability of the pump or joint to remove the excess swelling is reduced significantly.

In summary, the “subluxation” in Mr. Smith’s back was a combination of a lack of potential movement or mobility within the joint, the nerves passing by the inflamed joint were being irritated, the muscles were in spasm, and there was swelling in and around the joint.

Mr. Smith underwent “manipulation” or “adjustments” to the injured joints and their mobility was restored. This restored movement allowed the joint to efficiently pump or flush the swelling out of the injured area. Then, when the inflammation or swelling had decreased, the nerve irritation lessened and the muscles were able to relax. He was on the road to recovery.