

# Dr. Colin Gage

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

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## What Is Causing Your Headache?

Did you know that one of the most common forms of headache is actually caused by problems in the neck? Although you may “feel” pain around the eyes or the back, side, and/or the front of the head, the source of the symptoms may actually be the neck. This form of headache is often called a “tension-type” headache.

Unfortunately, the medical understanding of headaches often does not take into account the chiropractic model. The concept that headache pain can originate from problems in the neck (cervical spine) remains foreign to many within the medical profession.

Noted researcher Nikolai Bogduk, MD, PhD, professor of anatomy at Newcastle, Australia, recently commented: “the people in control of the headache field seemingly have not, cannot, or will not, recognize this paradox ... that the model for cervicogenic headache is not only the best evolved of all headaches but is testable in patients with headache complaints.” Several years ago, a Canadian anaesthesiologist, Peter Rothbart, MD, FRCPC, came to the same conclusions about cervicogenic headache. Dr. Rothbart made many observations in his own pain management practice that subsequently led to an article in the Toronto Star, the most widely read newspaper in Canada. The Toronto Star article, “A Pain in the Neck,” was subtitled: “Chiropractors were right”.

Many headaches are caused by damaged structures in the neck -- and scientific evidence proves it. French medical professor Robert Maigne wrote in his recent article that he “came to believe that many headaches originated with a structural problem in the neck.” At first, he was thought to be a lunatic. But, others took up Dr. Maigne’s work, including the aforementioned Dr. Nikolai Bogduk.

In 1995, a team of MDs at Syracuse University established neck problems as the cause of many headaches “with scientific, anatomical proof.” The head of the team, Dr. Rothbart, termed the Syracuse results “a minor miracle.” In the Toronto Star article, Dr. Rothbart made several insightful comments:

"Some brilliant people have put their hearts, souls and minds to this (headache) problem and haven't come up with anything. All we've been able to do is treat people with an array of medicines, one after the other, and hope the side effects won't be too bad". "We couldn't believe it at first. We've been able to put together a scientific explanation for how neck structure causes headaches -- not all headaches, but a significant number of them." "It's true that chiropractors have been saying this for years. Unfortunately, many (medical) doctors tend to have a jaundiced view of chiropractors, but they were right about headaches." "Most physicians are unaware of this entity (headaches originating from the neck), so a diagnosis of cervicogenic headache is rarely made. Thus, there are a large number of chronic headache sufferers who go through life with the wrong diagnosis and hence the wrong treatment for their headache."

Personally, I am encouraged to read that health care professionals, other than chiropractors, are realizing that some forms of headache can arise from problems in the neck. As a chiropractor, I know there is a connection between the neck and headaches and I have many patients who are now symptom free as a result of treating the actual cause of their headache –the neck. However, keep in mind that there are forms of headache that can be much more serious and even life threatening. Therefore, don't simply ignore your headaches. Once these more serious possible causes are ruled out, seek conservative and safe chiropractic care.