

REMARKABLE RECOVERIES

How Prolotherapy Changed My Life

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I was in my first car accident in 1987 which resulted in a diagnosis of whiplash syndrome and included pain and stiffness in my neck, shoulders, and upper back. I received chiropractic treatments for about 18 months, which helped decrease the symptoms, but did not fully resolve the cause of the pain. From 1989 through 1991, I was a cashier at a department store, engaging in repetitive movements. This created a deep, achy pain which spread down my back, and into my hips, buttock and legs, sometimes causing a slight numbness. I took Tylenol for the symptoms, which helped, but I eventually increased my dose to the daily maximum.

Later, in a college aerobics class I experienced a severe, sharp pain in my mid back that led me to see the college doctor. He diagnosed me with short leg syndrome, gave me a shoe lift, and enrolled me in an alternative physical education class where I participated in physical therapy exercises. The exercises helped increase my strength but did little for my pain symptoms. In 1992, I worked for one year as a waitress carrying trays as heavy as 20 lbs. with my left arm/shoulder, inducing repetitive strain injury. That same year I was in a second car accident sustaining fresh whiplash symptoms. I could not afford treatments at that time.

From 1994 to 1997, I worked as a machine operator, again inducing repetitive strain injury. By the time I began my first “desk job” in 1998, the pain in my neck, shoulders and back was pervasive and chronic. I tried more chiropractors, physical therapists, as well as acupuncturists and massage therapists. Due to the short-term effects of these treatments, and insignificant reduction in pain, I did not find it feasible to continue them. I moved on to various prescription pain killers/anti-inflammatories/anti-muscle spasm medications, but found their side effects unbearable and/or not worth the physical risks they imposed. In some instances the side effects contradicted their therapeutic purpose. I tried traction devices, orthopedic braces, TENS units, and more, but they did not make a significant difference

in pain levels. Additionally, the multitude of medical appointments, diagnostic procedures, and continuous treatments, were financially draining, not to mention a strain on my time and energy.

By now my pain was chronic and pervasive and was in my neck and shoulders, entire spinal area including my sacrum and tailbone, and my hips. The pain periodically radiated into my extremities, sometimes included numbness, and also caused migraines. The pain ranged from dull and achy to throbbing and sharp. The pain was in my joints and my muscles and occasionally aggravated nerves. My central nervous system became completely over stimulated, exacerbating the existing pain. The chronic pain caused sleepless nights, lack of concentration, exhaustion and weight gain. The chronic pain detrimentally affected my sex life, my work life and my recreational life. I could not exercise, I could not even sit through a movie, I had to give up driving manual transmissions—the list went on and on.

The psychological effects of chronic pain were even worse than the physical. I felt guilty over burdening my husband, I was self-conscious from the weight I had gained, and I resented people who did not suffer from chronic pain. I lost a job because of my condition and I was told to my face on more than one occasion that I was not in as much pain as I claimed. My first thought every morning was about pain, my last thought every night was about pain—and every hour in between. I felt helpless, hopeless, and at times had thoughts of suicide. Chronic pain had destroyed my soul.

In 2006 I saw an orthopedic surgeon who diagnosed me with Facet Joint Syndrome. As he explained, facet joints ensure that the vertebrae’s glide smoothly, allowing the spine to flex, yet remain stable. My history of accidents, overuse, and a probable genetic factor, had resulted in weakened and destabilized joints, which created pain in the joints and their surrounding structures and tissues. I went on to see the pain management doctor and we discussed the pain management options of corticosteroid injections, nerve rhizotomy (severing nerves to kill pain), and potentially, surgery.

I did not want to go the orthopedic route and I began researching alternative treatments for Facet Joint Syndrome. In 2007, I ran across www.getprolo.com, where

I learned about a procedure called Prolotherapy, which had successfully been used to treat a variety of musculoskeletal conditions, including Facet Joint Syndrome. A few months later, I had my first appointment with, Dr. Rick Marinelli, ND, MacOM, in Portland, Oregon, who specialized in Prolotherapy. Dr. Marinelli explained that Prolotherapy involved injecting weak/damaged joints/ligaments with naturally occurring substances, thereby triggering the body's natural healing system, which in turn would strengthen the weak/damaged areas and significantly decrease the associated pain. This procedure could be used to treat any traumatized joint/ligament in the body, whatever its cause.

Dr. Marinelli treated my low back and hip area, first. I had a deep dull achy pain in that area, extremely tight low back muscles, and sciatica symptoms as well. As a result, I could not put any weight on my left side while standing, and I could not sit longer than 30 minutes. I also had to give up my favorite exercise—hiking. Dr. Marinelli thought I would need between four and six treatments. I was amazed at how much better I felt after just the first treatment. I came back every two weeks, over a period of two months. After the fourth treatment I was absolutely thrilled to be able to put weight on my own leg again, to actually be able to sit at my job, and to resume my beloved hiking! I was completely amazed!

Next, Dr. Marinelli treated the ligaments, and surrounding structures, of my first rib. I had been experiencing symptoms of First Rib Syndrome, which felt as if someone had twisted my neck 45 degrees sideways, and then jammed it down into my clavicle. My neck and clavicle muscles were always severely constricted, inducing frequent neck/headaches. I could not get one night of decent sleep due to the severity of the pain and tension. The range of motion toward that side of my neck was so restricted, I could not even check my blind spot while driving. I had begun taking anti-muscle spasm medications and sleeping with a neck brace on—which I sometimes wore during the day—in an effort to tame the symptoms, but to no avail. For this area, Dr. Marinelli utilized a type of Prolotherapy known as Autologous Platelet Rich Injection, which utilizes plasma from the patients' own blood in the injection solution. I had one treatment, and within three months, all of the aforementioned symptoms had vanished! I was beyond ecstatic to be able to get good quality sleep on a regular basis, which in turn, improved my energy, mood, and concentration. Due to the success of this treatment, I was also able to stop taking my anti-



Jennifer DeLeon hiking through the beautiful Pacific Northwest, pain free because of Prolotherapy.

muscle spasm medication and stop wearing a neck brace. And, I could check my blind spot once again!

The third major area Dr. Marinelli worked on was my left shoulder joint, which was loose and unstable, causing major muscle distress in my scapular area. This problem also caused aching in the back of my shoulder, all the way down my arm and into my wrist. Since I used my shoulder for every activity, it was in a constant state of aggravation. I could never fully exert myself in anything I did, or the symptoms would flare-up. In just two Prolotherapy treatments the symptoms were gone and I was able to fully exert myself in all activities without fear of pain and tension!

Because of Prolotherapy, I avoided corticosteroid shots, nerve rhizotomy, and back surgery and all of their probable, and potentially detrimental, side effects. Because of Prolotherapy, I was able to get off of prescription pain medications, and significantly decrease OTC medications, thereby avoiding many unbearable, and ultimately detrimental, side-effects. Because of Prolotherapy, I was able to resume my former exercises, lose weight, and decrease my stress levels. Because of Prolotherapy, I was able to sleep well on a regular basis, which improved my energy, concentration, and mood. Because of Prolotherapy, I was able to engage in activities that so many people, who do not live with chronic pain, take for granted, from being able to sit through an entire movie to being able to bend over and pull weeds in my garden. But most importantly, because of Prolotherapy, the black cloud of helplessness and hopelessness, has lifted, and in its place exists optimism and peace. And that is the greatest gift Prolotherapy has given me... Prolotherapy gave me my life back! ■