

REMARKABLE RECOVERIES

The Hidden Culprits – Brain Injury and Ligament Injury: My Personal Journey

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In 2003 life as we knew it came to an end. My husband and I travelled the world together as international motivational speakers and missionaries. We were preparing for our 30th wedding anniversary vision of taking a year to circle the globe with the Gospel that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Our hope was to take a medical missions team in order to share that a relationship with God is real and personal, that God is our healer and that He cares.

Instead we were rear ended while at a stop sign in a country where we were without medical insurance or physician friends. Before the crash I ran 4-6 miles about 5 days a week, swam a mile daily and alternated weight lifting and core exercises with biking or kayaking. We were only home for about 10 days every 6-8 weeks, the rest of the time we were doing mission work. I had no need of medical care except for an occasional routine check up, malaria prevention medications and tropical disease shots. A couple of years before the crash, I was helping my daughter launch a product at a trade show and a chiropractor a few booths over insisted on filming my spine. He said it was the first perfectly functioning spine he had seen in many years.

I remember very little about the crash. I was gently extracted from the car by ambulance workers who transported me to the closest trauma facility. The hospital asked if I was unconscious after the accident, I said no because I did not know. I was later to find there were serious gaps of time lost which they could have found by establishing a timeline or by administering a simple computerized assessment. After discharge from emergency, I chalked it up to a bad night and attempted to wash the whole experience away with a bath. My pupils were two different sizes, my ears were bleeding and I couldn't see properly. I couldn't think

well enough to find the hospital number or use the phone, and beside, they said I was fine and had directed me to an orthopaedic surgeon for follow up. I didn't feel I could drive safely, and the rental car was towed. So I went to the freezer for bags of frozen food to stop the swelling and tried to stay awake. The next 2-3 days my face broke out in tiny blotches, which I later learned were broken capillaries.

The injuries I sustained were severe, yet because of the damage to my spinal cord and central nervous system I felt no initial pain. To give you an example of the level of injury sustained I was initially unable to move my legs. My hands lost the ability to grip or hold objects. In spite of having no memory of the accident and considerable impairments, I was sent home from the emergency room. I clearly should have been admitted, particularly for the head injury where prompt medical treatment would have minimized the collateral damage.

I sustained brain damage visible even on a .02 Tesla MRI, and later found the trauma had damaged my heart, broken my sternum, dislocated my ribs, scarred my intestines, and impaired vision, hearing, speech and thyroid gland, as well as the spine. It took 9 months to get referred to a neuropsychologist to check my brain. I got lost in restaurants trying to find a bathroom, had to ask my relatives how to play kindergarten computer games and lost the ability to spell or say complex words. It was very hard on my family as the social graces needed for communication vanished and my emotions were blunted. They grieved for the person they once knew. I grieved for her too. They and my friends supported me in wonderful ways but it was a difficult time for all of us.

I implored the insurance company to give me computer based brain rehabilitation software. The insurance company lawyer mocked me, made fun of the brain injury and called me an insurance fraud. But the insurance company doctors gave me the software. I knew living like this was not my destiny. That was the bad news but life got better! God finds a way to help you where you are. He will open doors so that you can be a provider of answers.

The computer based brain rehabilitation helped me as evidenced by neuropsychological testing before and after training. I am presently licensed to help people with these tools. If you or a loved one is going through this now, I

can help you. I determined I would study brain science and make a difference so others would not have to go through the hell I experienced. I shared with my doctors that I was going to be a brain science researcher and help others get their brains back after trauma. My surgeons wrote recommendations to help me get into the university with brain damage and all. They even showed me how to work a voice recognition system. I am thankful they chose to support what I wanted to do with God's help.

I kept their recommendations and read them over and over. They reminded me that I was a person who mattered and not a liability, disability or a brain damaged nobody. The law of kindness moves mountains. You have the power to change someone's life with words. I am also thankful for my husband and my family who believed in me and encouraged me not to give up. Today, I work as a brain researcher, consultant and developer of brain science tools that work. What you make happen for others can open doors for you.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) can be a hidden culprit. Unless you suspect it, no treatment will be given. A patient is often asked, "Did you lose consciousness?" They don't remember so they respond with a no. Recognizing the signs of TBI and insisting on appropriate treatment is the best path for recovery.

I am presently working to advance the availability of computerized cognitive assessments in hospitals. They can be administered by a volunteer at low cost. Emergency staff in many countries are not equipped to handle head injury because of the time it takes to do it right. Emergency room cognitive and neurological testing is less than ideal. I was assessed as having a 15 Glasgow score for orientation in spite of statements by family members who expressed concern about my mental function. I was to study this later and learn that I was considerably under diagnosed.

Actions pointing to a brain injury may include difficulty performing simple tasks, such as counting to one hundred by threes and repeating this activity counting backwards, distractibility or inability to stay on task or memory loss concerning events in the preceding minutes, hours, or days to the trauma. Brain injured persons often lose their train of

The Glasgow Coma Scale is used to assess the level of consciousness after head injury. It is based on a scale of 1-15, with 3 indicating deep unconsciousness and 15 being normal consciousness. The GCS is used around the world to monitor patients that have sustained head injuries.

thought while responding to a question or they offer responses that are tangential or inappropriate. They may stare blankly or undergo uncharacteristic behavioural changes. Language patterns, ability to spell or calculate numbers may be affected. If you or a loved one experience these warning signs after a head trauma, insist on a full neuropsychological evaluation and a high (3+) Tesla MRI of the brain read by a neuro-radiologist who specializes in brain trauma.

A good treatment protocol will be multidisciplinary and very specific in nature. Assessment will be continuous and treatment adjusted accordingly. Effective treatment means a brain injured person will recover the skills to function independently in the outside world and increase their quality of life. They will relearn the social nuances of maintaining relationships and will rebuild their identities and destinies. The faster a brain damaged person receives treatment, the better prognosis they have for recovery. Still it is almost never too late. With today's specialized tools progress can be made years after an injury. We have helped people progress and recover even twenty years post injury. It is critical to find a specialist medical team whose focus is on treatment and recovery after diagnosis.

Setting appropriate boundaries and realizing physical limitations can be difficult for a brain injury survivor even after achieving significant intellectual and functional recovery. Brain injured persons are emotionally vulnerable and can be exploited in the workplace. Friends, family members and medical professionals can help by showing the individual what it is 'normal' to accomplish along with determining that compensation received is fair and reasonable.

My husband and I plan to take brain technology into third world countries. Children become beggars, or worse, because of brain problems they have sustained due to parasites, disease and malnutrition. People ask me if God caused this to happen. My answer is "No, God will show you ways to make a difference where you are. He is with you." For me, Prolotherapy was a tool God used to deliver healing and this is how it happened.

I was still experiencing severe pain every day in spite of several spinal surgeries and multiple procedures. Allergies

to codeine and other opiates complicated the scenario. Medications can be unpredictable in the face of brain injury. Cortisone and radio frequency lesioning were of little help. Multilevel fusions and internal pain pumps were suggested as the “gold standard” solution.

My spine surgeon and pain management doctors, Dr. Merrill Reuter and Dr. Dannell Anschuetz at Lake Worth Surgical center in Florida explained the ligaments holding my neck and spine together were unstable and would disqualify me for artificial disks. Dr Reuter shared the notion that more surgery would be a short-term solution that could make things worse. He offered to use Prolotherapy and gave me some internet links and a couple of web sites to search on this topic. Dr Reuter explained I would have 3-7 days of pain before I noticed any healing and that he estimated it would take about six sessions before there would be any improvement.

I did go for several second opinions. They were not in favour of Prolotherapy, but could not suggest better options. The consensus was Prolotherapy wouldn't work and insurance wouldn't pay. Perhaps one of the reasons was and is because, like traumatic brain injury, ligament injury is also a hidden culprit. Ligament injuries often do not show up on X-ray! I am so happy I didn't take their advice because they were mistaken on all counts! Prolotherapy worked and insurance paid.

Later, I had Prolotherapy for my ribs and my shoulders. The ribs have stayed in place beautifully, the shoulders would have benefited from more treatment. I really recommend Prolotherapy for anyone with ligament instability issues. Prolotherapy for my SI joint and spine were helpful, particularly after I started to use The DonTigney Method™ to realign and strengthen that area.

Ligament injuries can be more painful and take longer to heal than a broken bone. They are common in traumatic injuries like a car crash, fall or sports injury. A ligament is a tough band of white, fibrous, slightly elastic tissue. They are an essential part of the skeletal joints; binding the bone ends together to prevent dislocation and excessive movement that might cause breakage. Some people like to compare ligaments to duct tape; they hold bones together. Another way of seeing this is to compare ligaments with elastic. Have you ever had favourite clothes where the elastic goes and loses its ability to follow and cling to your body? This is how lax ligaments work in your body. Torn

ligaments could be compared to a fan belt in your car or a belt in your clothes dryer or vacuum cleaner, once it tears there is no real way to fix the problem because each time the appliance is used it puts pressure on the belt.

Ligaments contain signalling features which tell the bones how much to move. Ligaments also protect the joints and nerves. When these structures are injured, the body works to rebuild them but this is a slow process. A severe ligament tear can take 18 months to heal, whereas a broken bone heals in about three weeks. When the tear is bad and the ligament can't heal, the surrounding muscles work overtime and the nerves do not have the same degree of protection which can lead to chronic pain and atrophy of the surrounding muscles. Severe ligament injuries that can't heal produce instability in the surrounding structures. When this happens, deep supporting muscles get weak, nerves get irritated (causing more muscle weakness), and joints get inflamed and painful.

Prolotherapy can repair ligaments and provide normal support to the joint. While most of our daily injuries heal completely, severe ligament tears, degenerated and worn out tissues, and those with a poor blood supply (such as in the knee) don't usually mend themselves. This is because low grade inflammation is taking place and causing pain but it is not strong enough to signal initiation of the repair process. Prolotherapy practitioners start by injecting a mild irritant, such as glucose mixed with local anaesthetic, to trigger a healing response in the damaged area. This otherwise harmless, natural substance causes a brief period of inflammation (3-5 days) which triggers the body to release its own natural growth factors in the injured tissue.

Most practitioners do these injections in a series, with 3-6 injections being considered the norm. Cervical instability is an exception sometimes requiring upwards of 20 injections. Prolotherapy can be used in most joints that are unstable. The injections work immediately, directing your body's natural healing mechanisms to repair damaged and degenerated tissue. The first stage of healing usually takes about a week, but the tissue continues to restore itself for 4-6 weeks after the injection. Prolotherapy needs to be precisely targeted and done by a practitioner who is getting consistently good results from the treatment. It may be good to ask the doctor for the name of a couple of satisfied recipients. They will be able to tell you about the procedure and what to expect as well.

Following treatment, it is helpful to use ice packs for 15 minutes each hour.* After 24 hours alternate ice packs and heat packs to increase circulation. Start exercise to create the optimal climate for healing and to release endorphins and dopamine that will increase self esteem and decrease pain.

If you have access to an electronic acupuncture machine and a cold light laser, these are very helpful for reducing pain and promoting healing. In fact, I take my ETPS 1000 machine everywhere I go. This little machine can be carried anywhere, runs on batteries and has saved me time and money that would otherwise be spent for massage and other therapies. It is my number one pain fighting weapon. Supplements that promote cell health such as vitamin C, glucosamine, fish oil supplements and anti-oxidants can help. It is important to have high quality protein in your diet to promote a healthy balance of amino acids which help your cells increase the building blocks needed to heal.

Getting enough sleep and regular exercise is important. When you combine exercise and Prolotherapy, the new growth is made stronger. Exercise can even help your brain grow new neurons, conserve immune function, strengthen cardiovascular systems, muscles and ligaments. Stress slows your body's ability to heal. Learning stress busting techniques or avoiding stressors promotes health. Prolotherapy prompts the body to naturally heal damaged and degenerated tissues. Prolotherapy is not a steroid which can block healing by inhibiting the natural inflammation cycle whereby new cells can regenerate and repair tissue. It uses a natural substance that promotes healing.

I am not entirely pain free but I can sit in a restaurant, attend a conference, bike, swim and run. My brain now works well enough to do fairly well on post graduate classes but summa cum laude without great effort is a thing of the past. I find myself more vulnerable to betrayal and emotional pain than pre-injury. Rebuilding functional identity, credibility and self worth takes incredible effort. It is worth it. You can move mental mountains, one rock at a time. Your life is a seed that contains the future within itself. Rebuilding your destiny removes the boundaries other have set for you.

Prolotherapy works for me! I continue to improve and look forward to a wonderful future.



Amy's first time kayaking after Prolotherapy!

A PATIENT CASE:

Marjorie Kirkpatrick (Jo) is similar to many of the clients Dr. Price works with. Inspiration, perseverance and training prepares individuals to follow their dreams. Jo was given little hope for life or success after her diagnosis of hepatitis C and myelopathy, yet she pressed forward to attain her destiny. Jo made an observation about her work with Dr. Price, "Amy and I studied psychology together but I learn more from Amy than I do from the courses. The courses have taught me about the workings of the human brain and mind. I had picked up the reins of my life for the first time in 40 years when I began studying, but I was not quite sure what to do with them. Amy taught me about myself and the power of my spirit. She believes in self-empowerment, how not to let other people (parents, teachers, partners, employers, or society) define who we are. Amy has shown me that who and what I am is my own decision. I just have to do the work, put in the time and believe in myself to make it happen. I knew how to do the work and put in the time, but I needed Amy to show me how to believe in myself." The things that are impossible to man are possible with God!

***Editor's Note:** Utilizing ice packs is not recommended by all Prolotherapy practitioners. It is best to consult with your treating clinician first. ■