

REMARKABLE RECOVERIES

A Hypnotherapist's Experience with Prolotherapy

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In the spring of 2010, I severely injured my back picking up a case of books. It was not my first time to injure my back, but it was definitely the worst. Normally, when I get hurt I go to a chiropractor who gets me back up and working in three to four days. But since my worst episodes were three or four years apart, I always considered it as just part of getting older. But this last injury was different.

I started out seeing many different health care providers for my back pain, to include: a chiropractor and Chinese masseuse. I have been told that I have 5 herniated lumbar discs (one ruptured), SI joint problems, and (I found out later) my coccyx out of place.

I know pain is the main issue for most people, and it was certainly an issue for me, but I'm trained to deal with pain. I'm a clinical hypnotherapist, and helping people control their pain without drugs is part of my business. But I also know that pain is there for a reason, so I am reluctant to mask what I consider worthwhile (not chronic) pain like athletes do with steroid injections. Some of my clients had undergone steroid treatments that drastically mitigated the pain, so I investigated that first. A pain management physician, in Sugar Land, Texas, injected steroids into three of my damaged discs. He explained that the injections would not just mask the pain the way drugs did, but that the injections would reduce the swelling and allow the discs to shrink back to normal so they could heal on their own, hopefully, without having to resort to surgery. That helped a lot, but it did not relieve the pain from my SI joint and tailbone, which was radiating down my leg all the way to my foot. I was unconsciously dragging my foot so much that not only did I feel like the Igor character in a Dracula movie but, worse, I actually fell four times, twice on stairs, because my foot kept hooking on things. I was a mess.

I was referred to another chiropractor, who prescribed water therapy (exercises in a swimming pool) and massage in addition to his treatments. The water therapy was probably a lot more effective than the massage, but nothing—short of drugs or hypnosis—makes pain temporarily subside better than an expert masseuse. Also, the massage relaxed my muscles so that the chiropractor could more effectively adjust my body.

I began searching the web to look for other treatment options. Was there anything that would help me long term? Was I going to have to learn to live with pain and the lack of strength and mobility? That's when I found out about Prolotherapy.

According to the information at various websites, the rate of success of Prolotherapy (also known as sclerotherapy and proliferative injection) depends on several variables, including the patient's history and ability to heal. Up to 95% of patients suffering from low back pain with hypermobility, experience remission of pain with Prolotherapy. In comparison, the *Journal of Bone and Joint*



Mark Stepp on his motorcycle and able to ride without pain after Prolotherapy.

Therapy reports a 52% improvement in patients treated surgically for disc involvement. A review of five studies involving 366 participants concluded that Prolotherapy alone was ineffective in treating chronic low-back pain. But when combined with other treatments, such as spinal manipulation and exercise, Prolotherapy can improve chronic low-back pain. Sounded good to me, especially when I found out that it supposedly helped cure SI joint problems.

I searched the web for SI joint cures and found Adam Weglein, DO, a Sports Medicine physician with the Center for Spine, Sports and Physical Medicine in Houston, Texas. He was everything I was looking for: honest, concerned, and inexpensive, which was good because my insurance does not pay for Prolotherapy. I just finished my 6th session. I'm wishing now I had gone to Dr. Weglein years ago. My pain is nearly non-existent and I'm getting my strength back.

In my own case, Prolotherapy has taken me from feeling my age to being able to do whatever I want (demonstrated by my recent 4,137-mile trip to Yellowstone on my motorcycle). I had 5 herniated discs in my lower back, plus my SI joint and tailbone were both out of place. I was in constant severe pain regardless of what position I was in. Walking, standing, and lying down hurt badly enough, but sitting was unbearable. I was walking like a 95-year-old man and could barely go to work. Other than a small twinge from the SI joint problem, I am virtually pain free today even without using my hypnotherapy techniques.

Prolotherapy, or this concept anyway, has been around in different forms since about 500 B.C. Today, the therapy requires that the doctor inject a sugar based solution, to stimulate growth factor release. In my case, he made up to 30 injections each time. Experts used to think Prolotherapy worked by inducing scar tissue in the ligaments; now they know that no scar tissue forms. It simply induces the body to shorten and heal the ligaments on its own. What a concept. ■

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