

COWIN CHIROPRACTIC CLINIC

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In attendance:
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NEWS STORY: John Sperring

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SPILLS WITHOUT PILLS

I SEE THE BENEFITS OF CHIROPRACTIC OVER THE LONG TERM

By John Sperring



JOHN AGED 12 YEARS

My first experience with chiropractic was in 1964 when I was about 12 years old. Up until then I had been a regular sufferer of **migraine headaches** with all the usual symptoms of sensitivity to light, debilitating headaches, and general nausea. After being treated at the old Prince Henry Hospital essentially as a neuroscience patient, medicated with things

various to no effect and being wired up to a machine to examine my brain function and not getting any relief, my parents decided to try something out of mainstream medicine in the 1960s: chiropractic. Long story short, after a few visits I ceased to suffer from migraines. That was when I learned to trust in a good chiropractor. Though I haven't had a migraine since, over the years I have had many severe and spectacular injuries that have made me glad to have learnt that early lesson. See *table below*.

Summary of Remembered Injuries



Bike, fall at 19 years

Bike, fall at 22 years



Car, crash at 23 years



Ladder, fall at 25 years



Horse, fall at 27 years



Car, crash at 38 years



Steps, fall at 48 years



Car, crash at 49 years



Car, crash at 51 years



Skiing, fall at 57 years

Some of the injuries were work related.

SOLDIER, AIRMAN, SAILOR

In the very early 1970s I entered into the *Profession of Arms* and began what is almost 40 years' service, interspersed with one brief retirement. At first I worked in the Army (Warrant Officer), then in the Air Force (Intelligence Officer) and nowadays in the Navy (Australian Hydrographic Office). I am also involved with the running of Air Force Cadets in the southern Illawarra, as well as other volunteer activities. Like the injuries tabled above, all of these occupations have tested, stressed and sometimes damaged my health.

For example, in the late 1970s I had a reasonably serious car crash. The Army doctor prescribed strong pain-killers and heat treatment. Instead, I immediately sought chiropractic adjustments for my neck and had good results. When I returned to the Army doctor for a review of my injuries he was self-congratulatory that his 'pills and heat' had worked so well.

REGULAR VISITS

Instead of visiting the chiropractor only after each injury, the mid-1980s saw me take a longer-term view of chiropractic as a way of staying well. For the 11 years that I mostly resided in Canberra I had regular monthly treatments from chiropractor Mark Tapper.

When I relocated to Wollongong in 1995, on Mark's recommendation, I began visiting Kathleen Bras at Cowin Chiropractic Clinic and, after her retirement in 2002, her partner Robert Cowin. It is a decision I have not regretted. Since then intervals between visits have increased from four to six to (nowadays) eight weeks.

IRREGULAR VISITS

Along the way there have been incidents and accidents which have caused me incapacitating back pain or sudden loss of strength in my legs. These problems have prompted quick trips to the chiropractor for an upper-neck adjustment and resulted in quick reliefs.

It continues to surprise me that relief for the back and legs can come so quickly from an adjustment to the neck, without any manipulation of the back. But time after time, that is what has happened.

PRECAUTIONARY VISITS

Sometimes I vary the appointment intervals so that they closely follow a period of activity; be it camping, snow skiing or travel which involves long periods of sitting in terminals and aircraft. For example, I recently booked an appointment for straight after my return from an energetic 3 weeks of travelling and full-pack mountain-trekking with the Air Force Cadets through villages in North West Vietnam.

As mentioned above, my usual interval between visits to the chiropractor nowadays is 8 weeks. As I near the 7-8 week time period I am in tune with 'warning signs' that indicate to me that my back is out of alignment. A simple test I have found is to try and walk in a straight line along a hand rail with my eyes closed. I sometimes perform this test while on a walking machine at a gym. If I veer off to the left, I know it is time for a chiropractic adjustment.

Getting my back 're-tuned' regularly has meant that I have enjoyed much more freedom of movement and reduced or nil pain in the neck and lower back, which is both very good for me and the people around me.

I have no medical conditions that require the taking of medication and I am very thankful for continuing chiropractic treatment. It has greatly contributed to my quality of life.



JOHN SPERRING, Lt. Cmdr, RAN

Chiropractor's Comment:

MIGRAINES

About 4-10.6% of schoolchildren develop migraines^{1,2,3} and about 50% may still be living with them as adults in their forties.¹

In Australia 46 years ago, John's parents took him to a chiropractor. Since then he has been free of migraines. Though certainly not the first, John's parents were ahead of their time and ahead of published studies suggesting chiropractic could benefit migraine sufferers⁴.

In Australia about 50 years ago (1960) Alexander "George" Cowin was relieved of his migraines by Wollongong chiropractor Finis "Jack" Moore. Within 10 years, two of his children, Robert & Kathleen, had graduated from Palmer College of Chiropractic in Iowa, USA, and returned to Wollongong to open this clinic (in January, 1969).

Alas! Soon after we had developed our mark-and-tap adjustments we learned that some lucky chiropractor in Canberra, Mark Tapper (mentioned above), had a name we could have used to build our fame.

SPINAL INJURY

Notwithstanding 10 spine-rattling accidents John works full-time, skis and treks with people decades younger than himself. Judged on three common markers of declining health, viz., stiffness, drug use and osteoarthritis, John at 58 years of age seems to have kept well ahead not only of people with a history of spinal injury, but also of people in general in his age group.

Stiffness: It's not too surprising that neck pain and neck stiffness often go together and that neck stiffness is often a pointer to past accidents such as whiplash.^{5,6} In 1995 John's neck movement on extension was stiff (i.e., one standard deviation (SD) below the Youdas et al⁷ average on CROM Instrument measurement). Fifteen years later, even when tested before a chiropractic adjustment his extension is about 1 SD freer than average and when tested after an adjustment it is about 2 SDs freer.

Drug Use: John has no ongoing medications.

Osteoarthritis: Follow-up studies of people who have been injured in a motor-vehicle accident (MVA) indicate that they are likely to develop osteoarthritis in the neck sooner & more severely than their contemporaries.^{8,9} On John's 1997 X-rays, very early signs of osteoarthritis (slight osteophyte formation at C5 and C6) were evident. On his 2002 X-rays, no obvious deteriorations had developed.

I haven't seen follow-up studies on people like John who have had four MVAs and six other violent accidents. It's a good bet researchers could not recruit enough survivors.

Robert Cowin, D.C.

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NEWSLETTERS IN PLANNING STAGES:

January 2011 : Winning against pain, tiredness and despair: stories from Bronwyn, Sam & Fran.

March 2011: Chiropractic & polio: then and now