

Working With Hearing Loss: Christina's Story

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By Dr. Derek Conte

Christina is a married, working mom of very pleasant personality. She called our office after reading my article, "Getting Over Vertigo: Kim's Story" (Brightside, Jan. 2016, p.3). She too suffered from headaches, right temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain, and pain in the right masseter (chewing) muscle, vertigo, nausea, and hearing loss --- a severe loss of hearing requiring hearing aids. Christina was very sensitive to changes in body position and barometric pressure and always had pain, ringing and a sense of fullness in her ears. Like Kim, she was diagnosed with Meniere's disease, which encompasses the above symptoms. She also complained of runny nose, a crusty discharge from the ears and frequently swollen lymph nodes. Her right ear was even worse and even developed localized eczema, a troublesome skin rash, in the external right ear.

Over five years, Christina had been to three EENT's and two MD's and was rigorously tested with three audiograms from 2009-2014 and, finally, an MRI in 2014. The symptoms kept getting worse and the three audiograms showed a steady loss of hearing sensitivity over time, initially with the mid and high frequencies, but progressing to include the lower frequencies as well. The right ear was always much less sensitive in all the tests.

The first EENT diagnosed the Meniere's disease and Christina was told she'd have to manage her symptoms. While visiting the second EENT (who ordered the MRI) she had a violent vertigo attack after the audiogram with nausea and vomiting and had to sit down to stabilize while her husband and son came to drive her home. Christina was told there was nothing on the MRI and to come back when needed. The third EENT fitted her with the hearing aids due to the rapidly progressing hearing loss. The consensus was that Christina had Meniere's disease and nothing could be done. She was given creams for her ears and a spray for her nose. Antihistamines and decongestants did not work.

When Christina entered our office she had low energy but 'soldiered on' very well during the exam. She'd been suffering for a long time. After a close history was taken and basic checks were done we focused on the main problem: Christina's ears. First, we tested her with her hearing aids "in" at the lower and mid-range frequencies with 128 Hz and 512 Hz tuning forks. She could hear the tones for only 4 seconds in the left ear and couldn't hear anything in the right ear.

When we examined Christina's spine we found a severe RIGHT rotation of the second cervical vertebra (C-2), which gives sensation to the entire back of the head and affects the sinuses, ears and balance. It also shares a nucleus in the spinal cord with the fifth cranial nerve, the Trigeminal nerve, which gives sensation to the rest of the head and face, including the eyes, gums and tongue. In addition, CN5 controls the chewing muscles. This was a significant finding.

I then described the anatomy and function of the ear and how the middle ear needs to drain down through the Eustachian tube or infection and great pressure can result causing the eardrum stretch painfully and be much less sensitive to sound. The eardrum must be RELAXED and under no pressure in order to move in response to low-threshold sounds!

We commenced with the adjustments of the C-1, C-2 vertebrae and the sacrum. Christina's whole body relaxed. Then we tapped the sinuses with a gently percussive instrument and finished by adjusting the Eustachian tubes on both sides. Finally, we retested her hearing with the same tuning forks --- this time without the hearing aids. Christina was now able to hear the tones for 8 seconds in the right ear without the hearing aids. The left improved commensurably and she stood up from the table without a trace of vertigo.

By the third visit Christina was testing at 20 seconds in both ears. By the fourth visit, she was up to 23 seconds without the hearing aids and was able to carry on a conversation with me while my back was turned to her as I was making notes.

Christina comes into the office smiling now and her natural energy is flowing freely. Chiropractic is a very powerful tool for the general health of every person. We see little miracles happen every day!

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