

Prolotherapy/Non-Surgical Orthopedics/Regenerative Medicine: How They Work and Heal

By Dr. Derek Conte

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A major cause of joint pain, degeneration, and ultimately joint replacement surgery, is looseness of the joint or joint laxity. It is like a car tire not bolted down properly. It wobbles and vibrates.

Where joint laxity exists (it can exist in ANY joint), great amounts of wear and tear follow over time. If the joint is loose, the articular surfaces no longer mate optimally, and cartilage is rubbed away. Then muscles tighten to hold the joint together, and eventually, there is bone-on-bone contact. This is called osteoarthritis (degenerative arthritis) and it is extremely painful. Many drugs are consumed to deal with the pain and this is dangerous to one's health. After the drugs begin to fail, joint replacement surgery is often pursued. But is there a chance to avoid that knee, shoulder or hip replacement surgery? There absolutely is.

When all else has failed to heal, there is a very elegant medical procedure available that strengthens, stabilizes, and restores joints. It encourages healing and re-growth of joint structures naturally, using one's own cells. It is called Prolotherapy (the more current terms used now are: Non-Surgical Orthopedics or Regenerative Medicine), and its purpose is quite the opposite of a pain control model. The procedure is non-surgical, highly successful, and permanent.

This procedure, developed in the 1940's and 50's by Dr's. George Hackett and Gustav Hemwall, is administered by medical doctors with special training. The term 'Prolotherapy' implies proliferative therapy, where known irritants like dextrose are injected into the areas of joint pain, causing a local inflammatory response. Also injected is a concentrated platelet and stem cell solution drawn from one's own blood and fat tissue. A huge re-building and healing event ensues, strengthening the loose ligaments and tightening the joints, stopping pain signals.

The patient is reassessed after a period of 4-6 weeks to see how much more stability has been acquired in the affected joint. The level of restoration will determine the number of sessions needed for that individual, usually several. As the joints stabilize, the muscles that have been used for stabilization begin to relax and stiffness and pain are eliminated. Elimination of pain has been reported in greater than 90% of cases. What is so brilliant about this treatment is that it is natural in its ingredients (derived directly from the patient) and is philosophically very close to "alternative healing" methods. There is also the advantage of little or no recovery period so life doesn't have to stop while recovering from deep surgery.

Candidates for prolotherapy would be those who suffer pain, laxity or swelling in the joints, noisy or "catching" joints and failure of chiropractic or other alternatives to permanently resolve the problem. The best outcomes are enjoyed by those who live a healthier lifestyle, are willing to exercise and to deal with the problem early on. No surprise here. The risks are minimal. This procedure is not covered by insurance at this time, but is MUCH cheaper than a joint replacement. I encourage you to do a little research for yourselves on this low-cost, minimally invasive and exciting technique.

Dr. Derek Conte is co-founder of Chiropractic Specialists on Concord road in Smyrna. For questions call: 404-784-6008. For more articles, photos, info, go to drderekconte.com.