

WHAT IS PROLOTHERAPY?

By Dr. Derek Conte

A major cause of joint pain, degenerative arthritis and, ultimately, joint replacement surgery is joint laxity (looseness) and the great amount of additional wear and tear the joint undergoes during activity as a result.

Is there a chance for you to avoid that knee or hip replacement surgery your orthopedist said was in your future? Maybe so.

When all else has failed (including chiropractic) to heal you, there is a very elegant medical procedure available that strengthens and stabilizes joints. The procedure is non-surgical, highly successful, and long lasting. This procedure, developed in the 1940's and 50's by Dr's. George Hackett and Gustav Hemwall, called Prolotherapy, is administered by medical doctors with special training.

The term 'Prolotherapy' implies proliferative therapy, meaning that the healing process is achieved by the natural proliferation of connective tissue fibers when inflammation due to injury occurs. In the case of prolotherapy, known irritants like glucose are injected into the area of joint weakness, causing an inflammatory response locally. This instigates the healing process and the laying down of new connective tissue which re-stabilizes the joint, stopping pain signals. In some cases, the patient's own platelets and stem cells are used in conjunction with glucose to promote quick RE-BUILDING of the connective tissue, in and around the joint.

The patient is reassessed after a period of weeks or months 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 indi-

vidual, usually several. As the joints stabilize, the muscles that have been used for stabilization begin to relax and stiffness and pain are greatly reduced.

Elimination of pain has been reported in 80-99% of cases. What is also remarkable

about this treatment is that it is natural in its ingredients (derived directly from the patient) and 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 building the new tissue.

Candidates for prolotherapy would be those who suffer laxity or swelling in the joints, noisy or "catching" joints or failure of chiropractic to permanently resolve the problem (it is easier to increase motion in joints than to reduce motion). The best outcomes are enjoyed by those who live a healthier lifestyle and are willing to exercise. No surprise here. Risks include infection, nerve or tendon damage.

This procedure is not covered by insurance-at this time. Fortunately, the cash cost for prolotherapy is low for a medical procedure (especially joint replacement therapy), coming in at around \$350 per session.

Doctors who perform prolotherapy strongly recommend trying all conservative treatments first, ranging from chiropractic, nutritional supplements or physical therapy before entering the surgical arena. I encourage you to do a little research for yourselves on this low-cost, minimally invasive technique.

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