

Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue
By Dr. Derek Conte

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Carolynne is a 75-year old aerobics instructor who came to me with pain complaints. In the early 1990's she received medical diagnoses of *fibromyalgia*, *chronic fatigue* and *polymyalgia rheumatic*. Since that time, she had been on a battery of pain killers, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory and steroidal drugs. She is an attractive woman with lively, expressive eyes, but she was miserable and didn't think anything could change for her. She had a big trip to Italy planned and feared it would be a terrible waste to attempt it feeling as she did.

Because her complaints were so numerous, we kept things simple and didn't attempt to "chase" the pain with adjustments everywhere she felt some pain; a fool's game to be sure. Instead, we noted the immense postural distortion, weight imbalance from right to left, and the angry restrictions in the upper cervical, thoracic and the sacral areas. We set about to free the spine and balance the posture and weight with specific chiropractic adjustments tailored to her, specifically.

Within one week she had 75% fewer symptoms; within two weeks: 90% improvement. One month later, she was clear of all symptoms and then toured Italy for six weeks without relapse. The only pills she takes now are vitamins. Why might this have happened?

Over 6 million Americans, mostly women of child-bearing age, suffer from a collection of persistent symptoms medically termed as fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndromes. In 80% of the cases these syndromes overlap. There are no objective tests for these illnesses so they get the name "syndrome" and the symptoms and suffering are very real. Taken all together, they are: headache, frequent infections, muscle and joint aches and tenderness in 11 of 18 designated trigger points, "brain fog", allergies, sleeplessness, stiffness, gastrointestinal problems, anxiety, depression and loss of sex drive. There are no known causes but it is speculated that the answer may lie in *neuroendocrine dysfunction*, which I will presently explain.

Typical treatments include medications for pain, insomnia, digestive problems, anxiety and depression – all treated separately. But looking at these symptoms as a whole, can we imagine a possible unifying cause? While it is difficult to quantify from one individual to another, **stress** can cause any and all of these symptoms. Stress can take various forms including fear, anger, worry or resentment - at the workplace, at home or even the world around us, such as it is. There is also the biomechanical stress of a misaligned spine which alters the normal neurological signals between brain and body *including hormonal balance* - which is precisely what *neuroendocrine dysfunction* means. There is a growing science called, *psychoneuroimmunology*, which is the study of how our state of mind affects the chemicals released by the brain, affecting hormonal and immunological status. By de-stressing Carolynne's system with chiropractic adjustments, do you think her body was better able to heal itself? That's what chiropractic is all about.

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