



Osteoarthritic sufferers find relief in chiropractic care

by Nick McLain

ARTHRITIS STARTED CAUSING pain in Angie's List member Nancy Brubaker's left knee about 15 years ago. Instead of choosing the pain medication route, the 52-year-old from Powder Springs decided to seek the services of a chiropractor. "It was so helpful for me," she says. "I've been going ever since." Although she eventually underwent surgery to replace the arthritic knee eight years later, Brubaker believes the chiropractic sessions delayed the need for surgery. "It kept me going," she says.

Osteoarthritis is the most common chronic condition of the joints, affecting 27 million Americans, according to the Atlanta-based Arthritis Foundation. Dr. Patience White, the foundation's chief public health officer, thinks chiropractic care may help some patients with mild osteoarthritis. "You have to be very careful, however," she says. "The chiropractor needs experience with patients with OA, and the patients can't have severe OA or problems

with joint alignments." She adds that obesity and lack of physical activity aggravate the arthritis. "So if chiropractic care helps a patient be more active and lose the weight, I'm all for it," she says.

Whitney Malina of highly rated Malina Chiropractic in Decatur, estimates 30 to 40 percent of her clientele suffer from OA-related pain and restriction. "While it will never take away or reverse the arthritis that's already there, it can slow its progression, help with pain control and allow people a better quality of life," she says.

Brubaker's highly rated chiropractor, Rickey Allen of Powder Springs, agrees. "I'm not curing arthritis," he says. "I'm just helping them live with it."

Brubaker, who works as a physical therapy assistant for a home health company, must lift and move people as part of her job. This became more difficult after a doctor diagnosed her with osteoarthritis of the spine 12 years ago, so she visits Allen every three to

Photos by Duane Stork | Chiropractor Rickey Allen uses a device called ArthroStim (top photo) on Nancy Brubaker to stimulate her osteoarthritic joints. He also says he applies only gentle pressure while doing massages and adjustments.

four weeks for a 20- to 45-minute session. "It helps me perform at work," Brubaker says. "I can tell the time for my next appointment is near because I start getting the back pain again."

Both chiropractors say they use gentle, low-force techniques on osteoarthritis patients. "You don't want to do high thrusts with older patients, in particular, as they can be prone to fractures," Malina says.

Allen says he also treats an 87-year-old man who required back surgery due to osteoarthritis of the spine and joints. "He has gone from a wheelchair, to a walker, to a cane, in two weeks," he says. "When the family first brought him, they had to virtually carry him in the office. Now he's beating them to the car on his cane."

Medicare typically covers a limited number of sessions, while private insurance coverage varies. Malina charges \$55 to \$70 per session for a cash patient, while Allen charges \$35 to \$55.

Brubaker says some of her colleagues express skepticism about chiropractic care, but she recommends it to many of her clients. "There are good chiropractors and some that aren't," she says. "But if you find a good one, it's golden." ☞



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