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M.E. and Osteopathy



The aim of this small leaflet is to explain to you something about the condition of M.E. and how osteopathy can help.

M.E. (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as it is otherwise known, is a condition characterised by extreme fatigue together with generalised muscle and joint aches, abdominal symptoms and sometimes, mental confusion. There are an estimated 250,000 people in Britain with the condition with 25% of these being severely disabled and/or housebound.

The very name: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome defines it as a long term problem which can, all too often, leave the sufferer in a very sorry state with loss of mobility, social life and job and with seemingly little that can be done about it. The problem, however, is not just limited to the sufferer themselves, but the carers are also put under huge pressure mentally and physically.

There are many theories as to what causes M.E. in the first place, but because the symptoms can be so varied, it can be a while before any medical diagnosis is made, and indeed, in medical circles, the diagnosis itself can be the centre of great controversy as there is no clear cut test to confirm the condition as being present. The condition is, however, very often precipitated by an infection coupled with some sort of stress or tension situation.

So how could osteopathy help you if you have M.E? Osteopathy deals with the mechanical component of disease and how this mechanical derangement affects other parts of the body including the internal organs. Recent research has shown that there is a mechanical link to what happens in M.E. and consequently, the

condition is potentially responsive to osteopathic treatment.

The theory is that there is a nervous system overload, possibly caused by a build up of toxins in the cerebrospinal fluid (the fluid which bathes the brain and spinal cord.) The part of the nervous system involved is the Sympathetic part of the Autonomic nervous system (part of a complex organisation of nerves that works automatically without any conscious control and helps everything from blood flow, the working of the internal organs and also, very importantly, the immune system.)

All M.E. sufferers seem to have problems both in the fluid circulation around the brain and also the dorsal spine (between the shoulder blades) and the upper spine. Once rectified by osteopathic treatment, the symptoms can improve quite dramatically. This fluid circulation around the brain actually creates a pulse type sensation of about six to twelve cycles a minute, though no-one as yet fully knows or understands where this pulsation comes from.

One very interesting observation was made at the practice a number of years ago in that M.E. sufferers always have a pulsation rate which is below six cycles a minute, and in some cases has been lower than three! When this pulse was stimulated to rise above six cycles, there was a proportional rise in energy levels. When this pulsation has been stimulated on a regular basis, the energy levels have tended to stay higher for longer and longer with sufferers eventually being able to lead a much more normal lifestyle.

This was a very exciting discovery and it is hoped that we can do some publishable research on this in the future.

There may well be others factors involved of course, which need to be addressed to get the body on track to a good recovery. Your osteopath will be able to discuss these secondary problems with you not least being the pastoral care of those who have had to work alongside you and look after you during, possibly, some very dark and difficult times.

Some simple exercises together with rest, plus a correct diet all have a bearing on the rate and extent of recovery, but the research has shown that the results can potentially be quite encouraging.

It may be a long time before the full explanation of M.E. becomes known, but at least there is now a working hypothesis that produces results in many cases and which can give a new lease of life to those who have suffered for a long time with this most debilitating of conditions. (See also leaflet on Cranial Osteopathy.)

If you have any further questions regarding M.E.--- that have not been covered here, or in fact anything to do with how Osteopathy could help you, then please feel free to ring either of the practices to speak to one of the Osteopaths in attendance.