

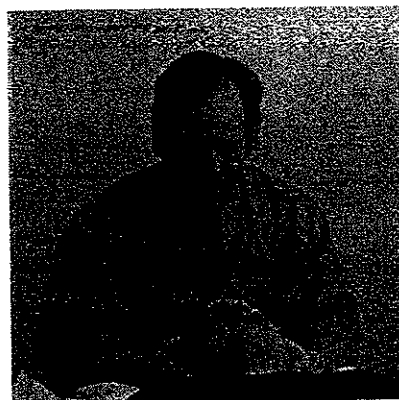


## When Other Chronic Pain Therapies Fail, Visceral Manipulation May Help

By Ronald M. Murray, PT, ND, Dr. of Integrative Medicine

When there is chronic, intractable pain, particularly following an identified physical trauma such as an auto accident or a fall, there is often some organ involvement, even though the pain may be experienced elsewhere in the body.

It is as if contraction, rigidity, or loss of motility in the liver, kidney, colon, or other visceral organ “anchors” the trauma—which may then be experienced as pain or loss of range of motion in the neck, head, back, arms, or legs. Because the pain’s source lies in the viscera, healing techniques that focus on the musculoskeletal system, such as chiropractic or massage therapy, may not reach it.



In these cases, the gentle, non-invasive technique of visceral manipulation may be able to get to the root of the problem and resolve it.

The organs sometimes anchor emotional, as well as physical trauma. Wendi Evans, my colleague at the Asclepeion Center, explains: “The liver, in particular, can become a storage area for emotional trauma. What I have seen most often is *old anger* stored in the liver. By releasing the tension in the viscera, we can tap into the anger or other emotional hurt that may be contributing, for example, to a client’s spinal pain.”

Wendi, a seasoned physical therapist with training in cranialsacral and visceral manipulation therapies, draws upon these and other manual therapy techniques in her practice. While treating all age groups, she specializes in degenerative changes in older adults.

Visceral manipulation begins with a “scan” of the organs and the visceral fascia (connective tissue) that surrounds them. This assessment is carried out by holding the palms near the belly (as if “listening” with the palms) and by gently palpating the organs. The assessment looks for any contraction, rigidity, temperature differential, or subtle displacement in the visceral organs or fascia.

I typically incorporate a visceral scan into a holistic healing session, particularly when a client presents with intractable pain.

Last spring, for example, a government worker and mother of two young children came to the Asclepeion Center. Her car had been hit one rainy rush hour the previous fall. Since the accident she had suffered from headaches and neck pain severe enough to hamper her in professional and family duties. She had tried muscle relaxants, pain killers, physical therapy, chiropractic, and massage. Nothing had helped.

Assessment detected a notable rigidity in the liver and the surrounding fascia, which visceral manipulation softened. The client experienced some immediate relief and, after two follow up treatments at bi-weekly intervals, she was free of pain.

Of course, not all results are this dramatic. But if you are a person who has struggled with chronic pain and have not been able to find a health practitioner to help you resolve it, visceral manipulation may prove to be an alternative treatment that could help you very much.

This article appeared in *YourHEALTH Magazine*, January 2004.  
Asclepeion Center for Body Mind Health is located in Silver Spring, Maryland, (301) 495-0933.

#200401C