

CranioSacrally Speaking

Helping the Brain Drain: How CranioSacral Therapy Aids ADD/ADHD

By John Upledger, DO, OMM, and Tad Wanveer, LMT, CST-D

CranioSacral Therapy can have a profoundly positive effect on brain and spinal cord function. It has been used successfully in the treatment of attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) since 1975.

Our clinical experience suggests that structural restrictions in the body, especially in the bones and membrane layers surrounding the brain and spinal cord, may be the primary factor in a significant number of such cases. These restrictions can interfere with the normal movement of fluids and vital nutrients into and out of the brain, which enable it to function properly.

In a gentle manner, CranioSacral Therapy can help release restrictions to naturally enhance brain function, decrease levels of ADD and ADHD, and in many cases, alleviate the disorders altogether.

Fluid Movement Is Essential to Optimal Brain Function

For each task a person undertakes, multiple sites and integrated pathways within the brain are required to operate in harmony for normal function to occur. Of some cases of ADD and ADHD, some of these areas actually are performing at abnormally high (hyperactive) and/or low (hypoactive) levels. What could cause such a dysfunction? It might well

be a lack of fluids moving within the brain tissue. It's essential for fluids to move in an unrestricted manner throughout the brain for it to perform optimally. Fluids (blood and cerebrospinal fluid) transport the vital and essential elements required by the cells, while also removing harmful waste products. When the delicate cells are unable to receive what they need, or they are unable to live in an environment free of toxic waste products, dysfunction may occur.

Abnormal Strain Upon Openings and Vessels Can Compromise Normal Fluid Flow Into and Out of the Brain

Traveling through openings in the base of the skull are vessels that supply blood to the brain, and vessels that drain blood and cerebrospinal fluid from the brain. Approximately 85 percent of this drainage occurs through two vessels that pass through two openings (jugular foramina) and become the jugular veins.

Sometimes stressful physical events such as the birth process, trauma or whiplash can cause the base of the skull to jam forward on the top segment of the spine. When this occurs, it places strain on the bones at the base of the skull and the membrane layers within the skull, especially in the area that forms the fluid-drainage openings. The neck muscles also

chronically contract to prevent further jamming. This often will maintain the compromised positions of bone and membrane, even for a lifetime.

What happens when such adverse strain patterns are placed on the jugular foramina and the jugular veins? Abnormal vein pressure can occur, which decreases drainage and causes fluid back-pressure to build up in the brain. Such pressure can lead to cell congestion, intracranial toxicity, abnormal pressure on cells and diminished blood flow to the brain. Stress such as this placed on the brain cells may cause them to react by becoming hyperactive in response to the strain, or hypoactive due to the injurious condition; or the same cell or cell groups can be hyperactive at some times and hypoactive at other times. Any of these responses can lead to a myriad of conditions, such as headaches, motor planning issues, speech issues, and one or more of the principal characteristics of ADD and ADHD: inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity.

CranioSacral Therapy Relieves Strain Patterns and Enhances Fluid Flow

CranioSacral Therapy is a light-touch manual therapy that addresses restrictions in the craniosacral system, which consists of the membranes and fluid

that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord. This vital physiological system extends from the bones of the skull, face and mouth, which make up the cranium, down to the sacrum, or tailbone area.

This gentle, hands-on method of care is highly effective in relieving adverse strain patterns and restrictions, thereby enhancing the movement of fluid throughout the brain, spinal cord and the body as a whole. The stronger fluid motion helps brain cells receive normal levels of essential nutrients so they can function efficiently and in synchrony with other cells. It also creates a brain environment that is constantly flushed of waste products and toxic irritants. When the stress of compromised fluid flow is relieved, the areas of the brain that have been overactive and/or underactive can normalize.

The results often are a central nervous system of greater balance and mobility, and a body that is able to return to its peak levels of performance. By helping the body make the biomechanical corrections necessary to allow the brain to function at its best, CranioSacral Therapy can help relieve ADD or ADHD that can cause great difficulty at any age.

Dr. John Upledger is president and medical director of The Upledger Institute (www.upledger.com) in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. For a brief biography, a printable version of this article and a link to previous articles, visit Dr. Upledger's columnist page at www.massagetoday.com/columnists/upledger.

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