

The Herald

From Tourism in Scotland



Web Issue 2452

January 30 2006

- Home
- News
- Sport
- Business
- Politics
- **Features**
- Going Out

LIVE UPDATES

- News
- Sport

SERVICES

- Search the site
- Free daily email
- News to your PDA
- News archive
- Photo Sales
- Help & FAQs
- Contact us

FAVOURITES

- Crosswords
- The Diary
- Local news
- Local weather
- Fantasy Football
- Week in photos
- Today's page 1

ADVERTISING

- Book ads online
- Homes
- Appointments
- Motors Online
- Business Online
- Advert inquiries

RELATED SITES

- Evening Times
- Sunday Herald
- Newsquest UK
- TravelShop

Given a little touch of therapy

ELAINE HUNTER

January 30 2006

You can use it on adults; you can use it on children. It is said to relieve a range of conditions, from ear infections to the symptoms of cerebral palsy. It doesn't come out of a bottle and it has no side effects: it's craniosacral therapy.

This alternative therapy, closely linked to osteopathy, from which it developed, is a gentle hands-on alternative treatment for evaluating and enhancing the functioning of the craniosacral system, that is, the bones, nerves, fluids, membranes and connective tissues of the cranium, spine and tail bone. Although it sounds like a form of head massage, it largely avoids the head, save for the very gentlest of touches. The therapy is creeping into popularity in this country and is being used to treat both childhood and adult illnesses. It's not a new therapy and although it is not a medical procedure, it was developed by an American doctor and is now practised all over the world.

For children, it is claimed craniosacral therapy can treat conditions from birth trauma, ear infections, colic, digestive disturbances, diarrhoea or constipation, to more serious illnesses such as the effects of cerebral palsy and autism, personality disorders, tantrums, hyperactivity and headbanging.

In adults, craniosacral therapy is being used to help depression, chronic illnesses, trauma to the body after accidents, migraines, PMS and many other ailments.

Some doctors are decidedly unconvinced, and have likened the treatment to "snake ointment the 'alternative doctors' used in the Wild West".

Linda Sinclair, a fully qualified craniosacral practitioner in Perth, disagrees and says: "When we use craniosacral therapy, we can identify areas of restriction or tension in the body which may be affecting proper function of organs, muscles and body tissues. These restrictions may be the result of injury, infection or perhaps if a child has had a difficult birth.

"It is a very gentle, non-invasive treatment which causes no discomfort or disturbance to the client – and this means that it is suitable for babies and children."

So what is craniosacral therapy, how does it work – and is it really safe for babies and children?

It evolved from osteopathy. In the early 1900s, osteopath William Sutherland discovered that skull bones of an adult are not firmly fixed but can move relative to each other. He suggested that this movement depended to some extent on the flow of cerebrospinal fluid (protective fluid that circulates through the spinal canal and brain). He developed a therapy called cranial osteo involving manipulative pressure – very, very gentle pressure – to encourage the release of tension.

Then in the 1970s, an American doctor called Dr John Upledger further developed Sutherland's observations, incorporating them into a treatment which is now called craniosacral therapy.

What Upledger discovered, while assisting a neurosurgeon in the removal of plaque from a patient's spinal cord membrane, was that the membrane pulsated – a biomechanical process independent of the circulatory and respiratory systems.

This was the first time he had seen the cranial rhythmic impulse (CRI) in action. He studied it further and developed treatments for it. His findings and teachings have led to around 38,000 practitioners training in craniosacral therapy, including osteopaths, medical doctors, chiropractors, psychologists, dentists, physical therapists, acupuncturists and massage therapists.

Practitioners believe that the craniosacral rhythm influences the whole body by affecting the brain and spinal cord, as well as the brain's pituitary and pineal gland, and, because of this, the craniosacral system serves as a core function on which the entire body's health depends. When it comes to the treatment, it is a discreet and non-invasive type of therapy.

BURN



We ask
nomina
Burns j
explain
words :
winner:

TEN



Read G
the Rai
The He
tabloid



spons

Ads

It's so
book ;
in The
newsp



s1jc

s1jc

St
recon

"What we do is put our hands very gently on the client's body to find areas of restriction or tension. This is when we can find points of resistance which we can release," explains Sinclair.

Despite what the name might suggest, the treatment focuses on very gentle massage of the trunk, hips and body as opposed to the head, which is given only the very lightest of strokes or, in the case of children, touches.

"Treatment is gentle, comforting and pleasant, and we hope that it will create a sense of wellbeing in our clients," says Sinclair. "Babies can be treated while being held by their mother or while asleep. There is no need for clients to get undressed because the craniosacral rhythms can be felt through clothes.

"I really would recommend that mothers bring newborns for a treatment, no matter what kind of birth it has been."

Research has shown that the compression of the baby's head over many hours pushes the bones of the cranium up against each other and distorts its shape. And, while the body's self-healing powers are usually able to remould the baby's compressed cranium back into its normal shape, that doesn't always happen.

Sinclair explains: "When there has been a difficult or long labour, the baby has suffered some trauma and craniosacral therapy can help. We work on all parts of the body and the pressure on a patient, especially a child, is extremely light. In many cases, it's so light the patient can barely feel it.

"People think that craniosacral therapy is all about manipulating the head. It's not, it's about feeling the craniosacral system, which works like a hydraulic pump system, in the body. We work on feet, neck, all over the body."

However, paediatric neurologist Dr Richard Newton, of Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, is quite scathing about the therapy.

He says: "Until there is plausible scientific research – and what I mean by that is if they conducted large studies involving children with conditions, treat some and not others, and then let independent researchers find results – then and only then would we be able to assess the benefits, if any, of this therapy.

"If benefits are felt by using this kind of therapy, then I would suggest a lot of that comes from the fact that perhaps the families and children are given some kind of hope and that it is a psychological help they get rather than a physiological one."

He fears families might be "duped" into trying such therapies. "They have to pay for these therapies and I feel that it's unfair to treat vulnerable families like this."

Not all doctors share that view. Researchers in the United States have recently found that autism has been associated with reduced blood supply to the temporal and frontal lobes of the brain. They also claim an association has been made between autism and restricted mobility of the temporal and frontal bones, restricting blood flow to these areas of the brain.

Dr Lewis Mehl-Madrona, a medic from the University of Arizona, says: "Craniosacral therapy is a gentle hands-on approach which helps improve central nervous system function and dissolve the effects of stress. It also helps boost the immune system and can be used for a number of infantile disorders in addition to autism.

"The therapy involves using gentle touch to help balance the cerebrospinal fluid and the membranes and tissues surrounding the spine and brain. A treatment takes about an hour and involves placing the hands on the neck, feet, jaws, and sacrum.

"Parents who have had their children treated with craniosacral therapy often report that the child is more relaxed, able to make better eye contact and is more verbal."

Sinclair concludes: "I believe the treatment can benefit anyone. Whether it's stress, fatigue or something a bit more serious, most people can take something from this therapy."

For further information on craniosacral therapy, or for a registered practitioner, contact the Upledger Institute on 01738 444404 or visit www.upledger.co.uk.

Did it make a difference?

I took my 22-month-old son, Murray, for a craniosacral session to see what, if any, the



results would be.

Murray, who is an extremely active and sociable toddler, seemed very happy to lie on therapist Linda Sinclair's table and stretched out; we both waited for something to happen. Linda placed her hands gently on his stomach and, closing her eyes, began the treatment. Murray, to my amazement, just lay there, relaxed and calm. He would never have done that at home.

She moved her hands strategically along his trunk, around his hips and legs and Murray seemed content and comfortable with this.

After around five minutes, he had had enough, though, and became restless; so Linda changed his position.

It was at this point that Linda sat him up and turned her attention to his neck and head area. Murray was a little more uncomfortable with this and didn't enjoy Linda lightly touching his head. He kept trying to break away while Linda gently coaxed a forward bowing movement from him. And that was it, about 15 minutes in total.

He wasn't distressed at any point during the therapy session and Linda seemed extremely pleased by the head-bowing movement; she said this was Murray releasing tension between the head and neck.

So did I notice any difference? Murray brought up a little of his bottle that night and the night after that. He wasn't unwell or different in any other way, so it wasn't anything we were worried about. Linda called to check on Murray's progress and believed that his slight vomiting was due to the therapy bringing out a virus or something that was working on him.

He didn't have any other after-effects and, as his mother, I can't say I noticed any other changes.

Perhaps had Murray been unwell or had had a difficult birth or a fall that he needed treatment for, it would have been different. I was impressed with how gentle Linda was and how she was able to put even a young toddler at ease.

Copyright © 2006 Newsquest (Herald & Times) Limited. All R
Sitemap :: Subscription :: Syndication :: Advertising :: About Us :