

Channeling healing energy: Anatomical variants and our patients, Part six

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Narrative abstract: While humans have a similar architecture with a head, torso, two arms and legs, we are as dissimilar as snowflakes. We each carry anatomical variances, all significant to the application of manual care.

Similarly, we all have variants in our psychological processing and functioning but there is one thing I have found to be consistent.

In the 1970s I explored biofeedback and meditation with Jack Garris, performing various types of meditations, self-hypnosis, and relaxation exercises and monitored their affects on our EEG, EMG, and temperature feedback. We never saw one form of biofeedback not influence the other, which emphasised to me that clearly our mind and body were inseparable. Garris would often say that we can't have a tense body with a relaxed mind and likewise we can't have an anxious mind when we have a relaxed body.

This is to be remembered as we look for optimal ways to channel our healing energy. It is important with our chiropractic encounters that we understand all our patients are different, both physically and psychologically.

Indexing terms: Chiropractic; chiropractor; anatomical variance; relaxation; healing energy.

Introduction

I remember in my first year of Chiropractic College when we were ushered into the human dissection laboratory. It was a very overwhelming experience for me and initially I didn't understand why we needed to be dissecting human bodies when our anatomical texts had appeared more than sufficient. But what rapidly became profoundly clear was how each human body was so different. Not just how we look on the outside but our organs and internal vascular and neurological dynamics were always subtly and sometimes dramatically different.

I wondered '*Was it true that humans are like snowflakes and each of us is individually different?*' So I looked into snowflake 'biology' and found that apparently every snowflake really is different from one another. There may be some that are exceedingly similar (particularly at the beginning of a flake's development) but fully formed snowflakes are indeed structurally different, even if only by tiniest of degrees. (1, 2, 3, 4) While every snowflake conforms to only one architecture: a flat star with six fishbones connected at the centre, still every snowflake is unique, since the actual configuration depends on many secondary effects, which are of random origin. (5)

Humans have a similar architecture with a head, torso, two arms and legs, yet are we as dissimilar as snowflakes? Like what I found in the human dissection laboratory all humans are different. We all

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have anatomical variants and understandably they are present in all our patients. All we have to do is look closely and a study of our feet, (6), knees, (7) hips, (8) pelvis, sacroiliac joint, (9) shoulders, (10) elbows, (11) wrists. (12) and vertebra (13, 14) show that anatomical variants are a frequent occurrence. Even looking at our sinuses, (15, 16) heart, (17) liver, (18) vascular, (19) and neurological configurations, (20, 21, 22) all show that we do indeed have individuation of our bodies.

Interestingly it appears that anatomical variants are a 'normal' finding in human anatomy and physiology, yet while variants are particularly important during invasive surgical procedures as well as with manual therapies, in a healthy functioning human normal variants may not present itself with clinical significance. For instance Bartret et al (23) determined of the seven hundred eighty-three subjects they studied that sciatic nerve variants were present in 150 hips (19.2%). *'None of the diagnoses had a statistically significant difference in prevalence between the variant and normal hip groups. Specifically, piriformis syndrome was present in 11.3% of variant hips compared with 9.0% of normal hips (p = 0.39)'*. It was pertinent to note that *'There were no significant differences in the prevalence of piriformis syndrome, buttock pain, or sciatica between normal and variant sciatic nerve anatomy'*. (23)

In the 1970s I had a huge opportunity to explore biofeedback and meditation with Jack Garris. (24, 25, 26) We would perform various types of meditations, self-hypnosis, and relaxation exercises and monitor their affects on our EEG, EMG, and temperature feedback. Jack was using the research of that time that looked at how specific biofeedback signatures could be created by studying meditating Buddhist monks with biofeedback. Using their outcomes as benchmarks we would look at EEG (alpha wave amplitude and frequency), EMG (muscle relaxation), and temperature (warming fingers and toes and cooling forehead). (27, 28)

One thing he discussed and we found to be consistent was that you could not have a relaxed body (temperature and EMG findings) and an anxious mind (EEG findings). Likewise if our minds were calm as demonstrated with EEG biofeedback we would see coherence with our level of muscle relaxation demonstrated by EMG findings or parasympathetic activity as demonstrated by temperature feedback findings. We never saw one form of biofeedback not influence the other, which emphasised to me that clearly our mind and body were inseparable. Jack Garris would often say that we can't have a tense body with a relaxed mind and likewise we can't have an anxious mind when we have a relaxed body.

It is reasonable to consider that while we are different on the inside and outside in our anatomy and physiology, we also have differences with our psyche and thought processes.

Even some studies of twins support this individuality in consciousness. (29) It does appear that effects of our life's experiences and environment plays an important part of the differences found in twins. (30)

So it is provocative that Carter discusses in his paper *'Our bodies, our selves'*, (31) that *'my body and I, the person [Carter] who writes this paper, are such that we are physically indiscernible. Therefore, my body and I are psychologically indiscernible Since I have a psychology, since I am in various psychological states, my body must have the same psychology. However it never happens that two psychologically indiscernible beings are located in one place at the same time. Thus my body and I are one. I am identical with the object that is my body'*. (31)

As a healthcare provider it is crucial for me to have compassion and empathy for my patients who are in struggle both physically and psychologically. (32) While we are all different there are emotional commonalities associated with humans in that we all tend to want support, love, and understanding.

Jack Garris repeatedly stated that *'We create the world we live in, by what we pay attention to'*. As we grow in our clinical sensitivity we can begin to *'pay attention to'* the importance of a non-dualistic approach, one where we understand all our patients are different and yet at the same time understand that all our patients want to be supported, loved, and understood.

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About

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Editor's note

This is the sixth paper in the series with the theme of Healing Energy. The previous papers are:

Blum JD, Blum CL. Channeling Healing Energy: Informed Consent is an ongoing process in Chiropractic encounters, Part Five. Asia-Pac Chiropr J. 2023;4.2 URL apcj.net/Papers-Issue-4-2/#BlumHealingEnergy5

Blum CL, Blum JD. Channelling healing energy: Awareness of Transference and Countertransference in the Chiropractic Clinical Encounter, Part four. URL Asia-Pac Chiropr J. 2023;4.1 URL apcj.net/Papers-Issue-4-1/#BlumHealingEnergy4

Blum C. Channeling healing energy: The power of touch in the chiropractic clinical encounter, Part three. URL Asia-Pac Chiropr J. 2023;3.3 URL apcj.net/Papers-Issue-3-4/#BlumHealingEnergy3

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