

A snapshot of Holistic health

Philip Maffetone

Narrative: A common condition impairing muscle function is low-grade chronic inflammation.

Addressing chronic inflammation through dietary manipulation is relatively simple and can bring rapid results. Removing junk foods and replacing them with unprocessed natural items can quickly break the cycle with significant benefits.

Supplementing with items such as fish oil, vitamin D3, or others whose requirements are not met by a real food diet is important.

Indexing Terms: Chiropractic; nutrition; inflammation; health.

Introduction

Understanding the relationship between spinal and other joint dysfunction and skeletal muscle imbalance is a hallmark of Chiropractic practice. Addressing the causes of pain, dysfunction, illness, and disease is a primary issue in all of healthcare. However, despite the philosophy, the approach is too often abandoned as the world's sick healthcare system is driven by treating symptoms.

Chiropractors commonly address musculoskeletal complaints thought to be primarily mechanical in nature. Yet today it's clear that metabolic and related biochemical imbalances commonly play a role in promoting symptoms of pain from joints in the spine and elsewhere, muscles, and in other areas regardless of names such as osteoarthritis, degenerative disc disease, and shoulder impingement syndrome.

However, a particular vicious biological cycle promotes a range of serious dysfunction to our physical, biochemical, and mental-emotional, and social health. We can zero-in on this cycle at any point to get started.

As a key endocrine organ, skeletal muscles effect more than movement and structure. The quality and quantity of each muscle contraction immediately releases myokines that functionally

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communicate with the nervous system, other organs, glands, gut, and virtually the whole body, affecting health. Positive attributes of myokines include improving metabolism, reducing inflammation, promoting fat (oxidation) burning, enhancing insulin sensitivity, and protecting the brain. However, an impaired myokine mechanism can reduce many aspects of health by disturbing our harmonious homeodynamic state.

A common condition impairing muscle function is low-grade chronic inflammation. It's a key component of a vicious cycle associated with two other serious major health problems:

- ▶ **Insulin resistance:** in muscles, it reduces glucose uptake and lowers energy generated by burning body fat, leading to physical and mental fatigue, poor blood sugar control, a range of cardiometabolic diseases, and other conditions.
- ▶ **Overfat:** defined as excess body fat that impairs health (even when normal weight and non-obese) the development of dysfunctional fat cells produces inflammatory chemicals which also impair immunity.

The result is reduced muscle strength and mass, spinal and other joint dysfunction, with significant effects on the nervous system, including autonomic impairment, aberrant behaviour, and poor mental health.

Clinically, pain from muscle, spinal and other joints, and the associated poor posture and gait, whether from micro or macro physical injury, are a primary reason for healthcare visits. It is also a concern in sports medicine, where inadequate recovery from daily workouts contributes to recurring injuries adversely affecting competitive performance. Research scientists continue defining the complex connections between kinesiology, immunity and inflammation, the nervous system, including brain function and mental health, and the many downstream conditions leading to pain, illness, and disease.

Assessing abnormal signs and or symptoms from such a vicious cycle involves a detailed creative process of ruling in and out the many potential causes, not unlike a Sherlock Holmes mystery. Or, like a child who gets an answer then asks but what causes that?

At the heart of these issues is body-wide low-grade chronic inflammation. It's a primary common denominator to a wide spectrum of abnormalities directly and indirectly contributing to preventable illness and disease, reduced quality of life, and death. This includes spinal and extra-vertebral subluxations.

Of course, aspirin and other NSAIDs are not practical long-term treatments for chronic inflammation, nor is cryotherapy. These are examples of treating symptoms. Likewise for dietary supplements containing anti-inflammatory nutrients, adding them to a diet containing over-powering pro-inflammatory foods can be futile; the logical first step is to remove the most offending foods. This includes those with significant and immediate impact in promoting the trio of inflammation, insulin resistance, and excess body fat.

First on the list are refined carbohydrates, including sugar (with most flour products being refined despite the names 'natural' and 'whole grain'). These foods promote inflammation immediately; likewise, when removing them from the diet, positive therapeutic effects can begin the first day. A second albeit slower acting dietary pro-inflammatory ingredient includes omega-6 fats from vegetable and seed oils, including trans fats.

Both these pro-inflammatory food groups are the primary ingredients of a single culprit, junk food, now the world's most common cuisine. Even the one-time traditional/cultural healthy foods are full of it, whether Indian, Asian, Mediterranean, or many others.

While today's healthy food quality has been questioned, most untainted natural foods still contain hundreds of active nutrients with effective anti-inflammatory actions that should be part of a healthy daily diet. Once this occurs, supplementing with items such as fish oil, vitamin D3, or others whose requirements are not met by a real food diet is important.

In summary, addressing chronic inflammation through dietary manipulation is relatively simple and can bring rapid results. Removing junk foods and replacing them with unprocessed natural items can quickly break the cycle with significant benefits including:

- ▶ Reduced low-grade chronic inflammation and pain
- ▶ Loss of excess body fat
- ▶ Improved muscle function (strength, mass, reduced age-related loss)
- ▶ Increased spinal and other joint function (posture, gait, movement)
- ▶ More effective recovery from physical activity
- ▶ Better brain health (autonomic, behaviour, moods, learning, memory)
- ▶ Enhanced immunity (reduced risk of infection, improved gut function), and
- ▶ Encouraging homeodynamics, the continuous dynamic adjustment of the body to heal itself.

Even the longest health journey begins with first breaking the cycle.

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