

There Really is Help for Concussions

An Introduction to a Different Way of Looking at the Body

By Andy Stella, DC, CMRP



Even though I love chiropractic and I was very good at adjusting, it always bothered me that a big part of our practice model is the idea of creating patients for life. I knew we could bring people to an improved level of function but, to keep them there, it seemed that we were obliged to see them endlessly. Like most of my colleagues, I would tell people they needed to come back, every week, then every two weeks, then every four weeks or six weeks or eight or ten weeks – whatever it was for that person, and that would keep them on that plateau. Without that, they always seemed to return to their old pattern.

I went into this profession because I want to help people, as I am sure most chiropractors do, so it was hard for me to understand why people needed continuous treatment to stay pain-free. I saw so many cases where a patient would skip two or three of their maintenance treatments, and they'd be in pain again, or

come back months or even a year later and be back where they started. I never encountered any conclusive answers to this question, so I just kept looking.

In 2003, I attended a seminar presented by Dr. Warren Hammer ¹, a leader in soft tissue therapies in our profession. I was hungry to incorporate more fascial approaches in my soft-tissue therapy toolbox in my quest for better and longer-lasting results. Dr. Hammer told me about a chiropractor in Canada who was doing work with something he described as “3-dimensional tension release.” Three months later, I was in Toronto, attending an introductory course on Matrix Repatterning.

I was expecting to learn just another technique that I could put in my back pocket and use for specific situations. However, within the first hour of the seminar, I heard things I had never heard before. As I was listening to Dr. George Roth, the developer of Matrix Repatterning ²,

I realized that he answered the question that had been bugging me for so long. This course provided a rationale that made sense, and as I saw the faces of some of my patients in my head, it all clicked. I started to think, “Oh, maybe that’s why I can’t get these people past a certain point.”

I had a case where I thought I would try Matrix Repatterning, because none of the tools I had learned up to that point, as well as numerous other therapies, including a visit to the Mayo Clinic, had worked for this patient. To my surprise and delight, that was my first successful case using the basic approach I had learned from my introductory seminar on Matrix Repatterning. I went on to take the full certification course, and I have never looked back.

Concussion Breakthrough

About three years ago, I saw a 17-year-old who had suffered a concussion as a result of a car

accident. At that time, he had been having symptoms for two and a half months, and his mother was taking him everywhere: medical treatment, alternative treatments, hands-on treatments – nothing was helping him. He appeared to be a perfect fit for Matrix Repatterning, so I told his mother that I thought I could help him in a relatively short time with this new technique.

Initially, she was hesitant because I didn't take insurance. She said she couldn't afford to bring him in, which I certainly understood.

About two months later, I bumped into them, and he was still suffering. It had now been five months of ongoing pain: he couldn't go to school, play sports, or even see his friends. They decided to come in again and agreed to start treatment, assuming this was yet another treatment that wouldn't work for him.

The result? After five treatments, he was ultimately better. He was able to go back to school and go on to university. He told me how thankful he was for the treatment and have his brain back. This is the same child that didn't even want to be sitting in my office, with a mother who said they couldn't afford it. The results were clear. I had finally found a technique that didn't involve continuous treatment. And not only that, but this technique had changed that young man's life, along with his mother's life, his father's life, and the rest of his family.

Six months later, his little brother fell off a skateboard and came to see me. He was the first teenage concussion case to happily come to me because he had seen the success of his older brother. I applied the same techniques and saw the same results. This was the answer I had been looking for.

A Scientific Way of Treating Concussion

Matrix Repatterning is a new paradigm developed over the past 30 years by Dr. Roth, based on the pioneering cellular and orthopedic research of Donald Ingber, PhD ³ and Steven Levin, MD ⁴, which describes the universal, underlying structure of every organism at the cellular and molecular levels. Dr. Roth realized that if this is how the body is truly designed, it must also provide clues as to how the body is injured and how to "fix" it. The assessment and treatment system he developed, based on these principles, recognizes that the force of an injury (impact or strain) creates an expansion and rigidity within the cellular architecture of the densest tissues of the body, primarily the bones of the skeleton and the fascia around dense fluid-filled organs. Bone research from the University of California has recently confirmed his findings⁵.

Matrix Repatterning was not initially developed as a concussion therapy, but as a method to help people recover from chronic pain and injuries. As the work continued to advance, Dr. Roth developed more effective ways to address these same injuries within

the bones of the skull. As he began to apply these techniques, he noticed that those with chronic concussion symptoms were improving in a few visits, in ways they hadn't for months or years.

Dr. Norman Doidge, MD, who is on faculty at Columbia University and the University of Toronto, is a world-renowned expert in the field of brain injury and neuroplasticity. After hearing about Matrix Repatterning, he conducted an in-depth investigation, which included many long hours of discussions with Dr. Roth, clinical observations of treatments, patient interviews with numerous concussion and post-concussion patients whose lives had been transformed by this form of therapy, as well as participating in the training program himself. In his recent best-selling book, *The Brain's Way of Healing*, he comments: "I view it as prudent to have a Matrix assessment after a blow to the head...observing such cases has led me to hope that one day, Matrix Repatterning will be routinely applied in hospital emergency departments ⁶."

The basic premise of Matrix Repatterning appears to fill the gap between physical injury and neurological symptoms, which may explain what happens three-dimensionally to the bones of the skull and resulting mechanical stress on the deeper tissues of the brain. Research at the University of Pennsylvania supports this theory, by confirming that neurons exposed to repetitive trauma-like forces become brittle at the cellular level ⁷. In recent years, Matrix Repatterning has also been verified to measurably improve neurological function in cases of post-concussion, by Dr. Mark Tommerdahl, a biomedical engineer at the University of North Carolina ⁸.

The Evolution of My Practice

Through word-of-mouth alone, my practice has evolved to the point where over fifty percent of my work now involves the treatment of patients with concussion symptoms. Most of these patients had chronic symptom patterns for months or years and have tried many other types of therapy. In my practice, I've seen a significant reduction in all aspects of neurological dysfunction in the majority of difficult chronic and acute concussion cases within five to ten visits for most situations.

It is an absolute joy to watch my patients come in to see me near the end of their treatment plan, with a smile on their face, talking about their life in a way they couldn't imagine a few weeks or months previously. Watching them move forward and experience real quality-of-life once again in such a short time is exceptionally rewarding.

As a DC in Minneapolis, I have been able to help people with chronic concussion symptoms (and many other conditions) from Minnesota and surrounding states, as well as from Alaska, Seattle, Texas, Florida, New Jersey and Canada. As I write this, I just finished a visit with a concussion case whose mom drove him eight-and-a-half hours to see me and will have to make that trip a few more times. I apologized that they had to come that far to get the help they needed. I hope I can exceed their expectations and that in the future, we will have more certified Matrix practitioners that can help all the people that need this type of care.

What I learned with Matrix Repatterning was a foundational issue that, up until that point, was not recognized. It tells us why many people are in pain and why most other techniques can't get them ultimately better. By the time many of my patients come to see me, they have tried many different forms of therapy with limited success. I can now take them to a level of recovery that nobody else could before.

The kinds of results I've seen might appear surprising to most people, but I've now come to expect them. In the end, this isn't about me or what a great practitioner I am. It's about the beauty of what this work is.

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