

# Visceral Manipulation Eliminates, Prevents Chronic Health Challenges

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Many-- if not most--health challenges result from mechanical restrictions on internal organs, or viscera. When these restrictions are released, the symptoms go away, typically not to return. Visceral Manipulation is an anatomically specific form of hands-on bodywork which gently finds and releases mechanical restrictions from the body's deepest and most important structures.

Viscera is another word for organ or tissue. Viscera include all the abdominal organs we normally think of when we think of internal organs, but also many that we don't normally think of including the brain and its substructures, the nerves, the heart and blood vessels, the lymphatic system, the glands of the endocrine system, and the organs of the special senses, like the ears, eyes, nose, and tongue.

## Five Important Principles

**1) Movement is the key to life.** All internal organs must be able to move passively to accommodate our movements, but they also must move actively around their own internal axes. Tissue function and vitality depend on this active movement, or **motility**. Typically, motilities consist of **inspir**, an outward, upward, backward (lateral superior, posterior) motion, and **expir**; an inward, downward, forward motion. Motilities are substantial: A fully motile liver, for example, travels 3 cm in each direction in each cycle. At 6-8 cycles per minute, the motility of a healthy liver amounts to **600 meters in 24 hours!** When motilities are normal, we enjoy health. Restrictions are pathological; they cause disease in the organ with the restriction, disturb neighboring structures, and will eventually cause disease there as well.

In most organs, motilities are paired. For example, liver and stomach motilities are paired, as are those of the right and left kidney, ascending and descending colon, right and left lung, right and left hemisphere. One of the few organs that isn't paired is the heart. But motility is extremely important to the heart and consists of a pendulum like motion back and forth across the thorax. In order for the body to run on time--to work well, to approach optimal health, organs need to be freed up, their motilities optimized, and then paired motilities need to be balanced.

**2 & 3) The body is intelligent and hierarchical.** It sacrifices less important structures and tissues to protect more important. When there is a restriction on an internal organ, the body recruits muscles, bones, and less important organs to minimize the effect on the more important organ. Studies suggest that up to 60% of chronic spinal imbalances are merely symptoms of restrictions on more important organs.

The body's most important organs are the heart and brain. The body will always minimize the effect of restrictions on either, often by tightening muscles and pulling the spine out of alignment. **Whiplash**, for example, usually produces restrictions on the arteries of the neck. These vascular restrictions threaten the brain's blood supply and can exert a mechanical drag or tension on the heart. The body will attempt to minimize the effect of these restrictions by tightening muscles to shorten the distance between the head and the heart, especially on the side with the greatest vascular restrictions. This will reduce the problem but not address the cause. If arterial supplies to the brain are inadequate--as often happens after whiplash, blood pressure rises in an attempt to force blood through the restriction and the body will short blood supplies to all other tissues. After the heart's and brain's blood shortfall is corrected, the body resumes normal deliveries elsewhere, muscles relax, and the spine realigns. Often instantaneous, these changes are readily felt by most patients.

Too often, health practitioners including many doctors, chiropractors, and massage therapists misinterpret this basic response to whiplash. Instead, they focus on the symptoms using muscle relaxants, anti-inflammatories, steroids, anti-hypertension and anti-stress meds, spinal adjustments, massage, and exercises, all of which undercut the body's best efforts to deal with the crisis.

#### **4)The body has an innate, or built-in, ability to compensate for mechanical restrictions.**

Varying from person to person, depending on genetics, history, attitude, and over-all health, this ability is finite. When the ability to compensate is exhausted, symptoms will begin to arise. In some cases, this may take years. In others, it may be almost immediate. When people are healthy, symptoms may at first be extremely subtle, so that we don't even recognize them or are able to ignore them. . If the onset is gradual or not alarming, the symptom may creep under our personal radar for years. Furthermore, symptom don't necessarily arise in the immediate vicinity of the restriction.

For example, a restriction on a kidney may produce a general sense of fatigue, breathing challenges, constipation, or pain in a hip, knee, or ankle.

Because of the passage of time and the distance between the restriction and the symptom, people and practitioners often fail to connect a symptoms with their causative restriction. However, thanks to various techniques that allow us to find restrictions with our hands, but manual therapists can make the connection. And even if they don't make the connection, often all we need to do is free up the restriction, and the body will take care of the rest.

### **The Fallacy of the Body-Mind Connection**

In recent years there has been much talk about a body-mind connection. Despite what you may have been led to believe, **there has never been a separation between body, mind, and spirit.**

This is something that physicians, philosophers, shamans, and medicine men and medicine women the world over have know for thousands of years.

Indeed, many believe that first there is a spiritual or emotional injury and that opens the door to physical illness and injury.

When a restriction doesn't respond to purely mechanical approaches within a few minutes, often there is either some scar tissue or buried content at play. We can use the immune system to dissolve adhesions and scar tissue, often very quickly. Buried content also tends to act like glue. Content includes emotions, beliefs, attitudes, or issues stored in the body and is extremely common. In fact, anytime we experience an emotional overload, we dump the excess automatically into the tissue. Excess or overload doesn't necessarily imply a huge quantity of stress or upset, just more than we have the ability or luxury to deal with at the time. In retrospect and out of the context of the moment, it may seem laughably insignificant.

Our nervous system puts the content in the tissue to prevent us from going nuts and allow us to continue to function. It's not the nervous systems intention that we bury this forever, turning our body into a graveyard for a lifetime of trauma, just long enough until we can roll up our sleeves and deal with it. Unfortunately, our culture doesn't teach us to do this regularly, say daily at bedtime. This is unfortunate because the process of letting go is in most case exceedingly simple and easy, typically consisting of little more than giving ourselves permission to let go. Once this is done, however, the restriction typically relents and it becomes a simple matter to restore normal mobility and motility and improve fluid exchange and vitality. The change in the tissues are immediately palpable.

## **Repetitive Motion Injuries**

**Restricted motility also equals repetitive motion injuries.** For example, even a small restriction on a heart motilities per year makes the heart work harder than it would otherwise--and accelerates wear and tear on the heart tissue. Given that there are on average 38 million heart beats and 4.2 million heart motilities per year, Restrictions on the heart, either directly or through blood vessels rapidly translate into repetitive motion injuries. Similarly with the lung, which inflate on average about 6.3 million times per year and have about 4.2 million motilities. Lest you think that the smaller number of lung inflations compared to heartbeats means that a lung restriction entails a reduced risk of repetitive motion injury, remember that the motion of inhalation is much larger than the motion of a heartbeat. Furthermore, when a restriction is present in the lungs, the sheer number of lung inflations is still more than enough to create repetitive motion injuries to neighboring structures. These would include, the spine, brain, central nervous system, heart, vascular system, esophagus, stomach, liver, abdominal organs, shoulders, and hips. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a situation in which a restriction on the heart did not have a deleterious

effect on the lungs and all other neighboring structures, or vice versa.

## **VM Takes Specificity to New Levels**

When Visceral Manipulation began with Dr. Jean Pierre Barral's discovery of motility less than 30 years ago, the initial focus was on freeing up the mobility and motility of the the obvious, large internal organs. The efficacy of the work—the existence of motility and improvements to motility following manual treatment--was documented using the latest imaging techniques as well as empirical results from tens of thousands of clinical cases. .

That notion rapidly evolved to include increasingly smaller organs, and their functional units, and the work has become much more specific. Dr. Barral, Dr. Alain Crobier, and other VM pioneers have subsequently developed and perfected extremely gentle and specific techniques for freeing up and optimizing individual nerves, blood vessels, vertebrae, discs, and the functional subunits of the body's most important internal organs.

Dr. Barral has also developed manual thermal diagnostic techniques and other manual listening techniques equal in sensitivity and accuracy to those of the latest imaging devices. Dr. Barral has shown that all restrictions are pathological and that they are always accompanied by detectable thermal projections or thermal anomalies off the body. His hands can detect thermal projections from the body as small as 4/1000 of a degree centigrade, or .02 degrees F. Of course, the advantages of manual thermal diagnosis (MTD) over modern imaging techniques are that MTD is essentially free and entails none of the body costs or health risks associated with X-rays, MRIs, and such.

By finding and releasing these restrictions--often years before symptoms arise--Visceral Manipulation makes it possible to restore our ability to compensate, allow structures to function better with less effort, and takes the meaning of **first, do no harm** ( the Hypocratic oath sworn by all doctors upon graduation from medical school) and notion of **prevention** to whole new levels.

For the past 15 years, **Mike Macy, CST**, has specialized in combining CranioSacral Therapy and Visceral Manipulation. In each, he is Alaska's most highly trained practitioner.