

Manual Lymphatic Drainage, the Autonomic Nervous System, CFS and Fibromyalgia: P...

Research into the Lymphatic system has really taken off over the last two decades since immunologists proved clinically and unequivocally that lymphocytes produce antibodies which protect the body against viruses and infection.

Researchers then began to query whether obstructions in severely swollen lymph nodes could be the underlying cause of a variety of ailments which were mystifying the medical profession.

Other researchers also began to investigate whether it could be theoretically possible to unblock the lymphatic drainage system with massage techniques.

In the early days of MLD, treatment was largely focused on skin complaints and sinus problems related to the face and head.

It is really only over the last decade that developments in science have provided new insights and allowed microscopic research of the lymphatic system.

Electron microscopes, tracer methods, computers and macromolecular chemistry have meant that researchers have made inroads and discoveries about the lymphatic system that were previously considered pure speculation.

The vital substance DNA was discovered in the lymphocyte nucleus. This was a critical breakthrough since DNA forms the basis of life and genetic traits in every cell, the very blueprint of life was now known to be contained in lymph.

The lymph system therefore not only guards against infection, it is an essential source of good health and life itself.

Armed with this new information, immunologists went on to prove conclusively that lymphocytes are entirely responsible for the production of antibodies to combat all viruses and infections.

An immunity that has developed and evolved to earn us our right to live on the planet today.

Given this information and how recently it has become apparent and undeniably conclusive, the medical profession is only now waking up to the true implications of an unhealthy or damaged lymphatic system.

The lymphatic system serves to clean and drain the body's tissues, while also providing a defence mechanism that carries out vital protective functions.

To put it in layman's terms, just as red blood cells act as transport mechanisms for oxygen and carbon dioxide, the lymph fluid carries what is referred to as a "lymph-obligatory" load. This is a mixture of vital substances and toxins, which must be returned to the blood stream.

Lymph carries plasma proteins necessary to cells as building blocks of life; it also carries vitamins and hormones to cells and destroyed or dying cells and waste products away from them for excretion.

Some waste materials and dying cells carried by the lymph systems are too large to pass through the walls of the venous system and it is therefore critical that they are transported by the lymph.

It can be seen therefore that the use of MLD in an unhealthy, slow, damaged or dysfunctional lymphatic system will be extremely beneficial to a patients overall wellbeing.

Lymphocytes carry building blocks to cell tissues and MLD greatly accelerates the delivery of the Lymph and

therefore the entire process of cell building and repair.

Millions of lymphocytes are produced all the time in the lymph tissues, on average 35 billion per day increasing to 560 billion per day during periods of infection and stress.

It is no doubt that today we are living on a veritable swamp of bacteria and viruses. The deadliest foes with which humanity must contend are 7 microns in diameter. They carry out lightning strikes that can reach the brain within 5 seconds of entering a cut on your finger, or through membranes in your eyes, nose and throat.

This is the reality of what our immune systems must contend with on a continual, daily basis. They do so by maintaining an arsenal of around 26 billion white blood cells. There are chemical guards, biological killer cells, macrophages, phagocytes, T cells, the list is endless.

Ultimately we are the end result of 3 billion years of evolution beginning with a primordial soup and ending through natural selection with the strongest collection of cells capable of defending themselves from all but the most deadly of invaders

Manual Lymphatic Drainage and the Autonomic Nervous System

I have written previously about the connection between a dysfunctional Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) and CFS/Fibromyalgia patients.

Now I will begin to explain this connection in greater detail and discuss the effect MLD has on the ANS. The ANS we know consists of the Sympathetic nervous system and the Parasympathetic nervous system.

The Sympathetics are often known as the "day nerve" that make us active and allow us to work, the Parasympathetics are known as the "night nerve", allowing us to rest sleep and renew our strength. These two nerves extend throughout our entire body all the way to our skin.

In a healthy subject the ANS is carefully balanced between the day and night nerve.

However in modern, so called civilized society we have to contend with stress, the environment, a faulty work/life balance, and a denial of our biorhythmic sleep patterns.

Everything is disturbed and we no longer have a natural balance within our Autonomic systems. As such the Sympathetic nervous system predominates; we are always on the go.

Our sleep patterns, rest, recovery and repair as controlled by the Parasympathetic nervous system becomes submissive and faulty and we begin to experience fatigue and depression.

At this point people are frequently diagnosed with "stress" and are discharged from work, or take whatever break they need. They recharge their batteries, return to the stressful scenario and the cycle repeats itself indefinitely (until it doesn't!)

I have outlined this process not because it has any relation to CFS and Fibromyalgia but because it acts as an excellent analogy in understanding what happens to CFS and Fibromyalgia patients on a far more insidious scale.

The initial trigger which started your episode of CFS and/or Fibromyalgia caused lesions in your brain and spinal column which have left your ANS damaged and in a sympathetically dominant state.

In people who have no musculoskeletal imbalance and a healthy Lymphatic system these lesions then repair themselves over the course of 6 months and they progress from initial infection to Post viral syndrome to become fully recovered.

Unfortunately in our cases the musculoskeletal imbalance that was already manifest in your body prior to attack is not allowing the Lymphatic system to function effectively to repair the damaged areas of your ANS nerves, and is simultaneously maintaining and irritating the nerve endings, so maintaining your CFS and Fibromyalgia symptoms

The imbalance in the ANS has a cascade effect causing immunological and endocrine dysfunction, with further detrimental effects on the entire lymphatic system. The slowing down and dysfunction of the lymphatics is partly what is making you feel so poorly in conjunction with the constant irritation of the Sympathetic nerve.

Muscular hypotension results from a subconscious background; our conscious mind is overridden by motor and sensory functions at will. The sources of this subconscious activity are in the Autonomic centres of the brain and spinal column, precisely where lesions have been microscopically identified in CFS and Fibromyalgia patients.

MLD has the effect through massage of the skin to accelerate lymph flow and cause an extremely powerful soothing effect on the sensitive nerve endings of the dominant Sympathetic system, and through this can begin to repair and rebalance the ANS.

I am writing this in such a way that readers should by now be piecing together the parts of this puzzle and what has happened to them, the whys and wherefores that quiz all patients and providers involved in the Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue mystery.

Understanding the puzzle is essential for any treatment strategy to be effective. It is not enough just to accept the treatment without understanding WHY you are accepting the treatment.

However, understanding the cause and how the therapy relates to a proposed cure, is an extremely potent combination and will facilitate the therapy to have a much more powerful, long-term and deep effect on the cause of your condition instead of the continual daily battle against the symptoms

In my next article I will be looking in even more detail at reflexes, immunological effects, connective tissues, and the body's transport systems in relation to MLD, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and its treatment.

Short note about the author

Dr Mark J Shaw. Mark is the author of a new digital book and training manual "Beat Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome" <http://www.BeatFibroAndFatigue.com>.

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