

# Your Community Connection

## Combatting chronic pain

### Dispelling the myths of chiropractors

**Michael Peeling**  
Your Brant Connection

More than two years ago Phillip Walbourne started suffering from painful headaches that only got worse despite several attempts at

treatment.

The 40-year-old Brantford resident recalls when the pain first hit him.

"I had this terrible pain at the back, right hand side of my head," he said. "I didn't know if it was a stroke

or was it my blood pressure?"

Over the months that followed, the headaches plagued him more frequently - a few times a week and sometimes in the form of migraines. The frequency increased to the point where he was getting a few migraines each week, but no doctor could tell him why.

Eventually he went for an MRI and a CAT scan at the Brantford General Hospital.

Based on the results, a doctor told Walbourne he has arthritis in his neck, most likely brought on by a traumatic injury he could have suffered as a child.

"When the doctor told me that, I knew exactly what had caused it," Walbourne said. "As a kid, I played hockey. One time, I was skating along and tripped. I went head first into the boards."

Walbourne said that he lost the use of his right side for less than two days because of the head trauma, but then he bounced back and did not experience any symptoms connected to the incident for years.

However, he said doctors told him the effects of the injury could come back to haunt him.

Fast forward a few decades and the doctor who diagnosed Walbourne's arthritis told him he would "just have to deal with the pain."

That wasn't the news Walbourne wanted to hear.

Walbourne tried injections of cortisone and an agent that froze his head, giving him complete relief from the pain on about 15



**MICHAEL PEELING** Your Brant Connection

Phillip Walbourne, 40, seated, has been dealing with severe, arthritis-induced neck pain, daily headaches and frequent migraines for more than two years. He recently started treatment with Dr. Guy Pelletier of the Brant Pain Relief clinic on Grey Street and will be the subject of a series of articles tracking his progress.

different occasions.

"They were great, but when the freezing wore off I was back to square one," he said. "A few hours later I would have a worse headache than before."

He couldn't handle taking narcotics such as oxycodone for the pain because they made him nauseous.

The next potential fix was nerve blocker injections, which he was told would help kill off the damaged cells in his neck responsible for the pain.

"After a while, I said enough is enough," Walbourne said. "Not one of these things is doing me any good."

Walbourne was frustrated that the treatments he tried based on doctor recommendation were only temporary fixes that didn't address his underlying problem.

Without any treatments, the pain took a toll on him professionally and personally.

"I took 17 sick days in one year," he said. "Not in 20 years of work had I taken that many sick days before the headaches."

"My quality of life went down hill. I used to be out in the yard with my wife and going for bike rides with my son."

Walbourne is thankful for his family's understanding, but begrudges the physical side effects the headaches caused, such as weight gain from inactivity.

He is just as frustrated with the lack of understanding from others who haven't dealt with chronic pain.

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"Having a bad headache one day doesn't mean you can understand what it's like to have a constant headache for two years," Walbourne said. "When you have a migraine, you can't focus and it affects everything in your life. People have to deal with you and your pain. It's been a long road to get to this point."

Not looking forward to starting treatment with nerve blockers, Walbourne saw hope in a newspaper ad placed by Dr. Guy Pelletier, a chiropractor at the Brant Pain Relief clinic on Grey Street.

Pelletier invited people who suffer from chronic pain and haven't found relief to write down their stories and submit them to him.

His call to the pub-

lic through the media was born out of frustration with statistics he read saying that 1 in 10 people between the ages of 12 and 40 are living with chronic pain in Canada.

Pelletier said the "common and costly problem" often has roots in fibromyalgia, arthritis, migraines or back problems.

"Usually these conditions are not really treated, but managed instead of treating the root problem," Pelletier said.

In an effort to dispel myths and fears many people seem to hold onto about what chiropractors do, Pelletier wants to show the public what chiropractors and laser therapy can do to help alleviate the chronic pain of people such as Walbourne.

"I would like to showcase what we can offer instead

of medications and injections," Pelletier said.

When it comes to Walbourne's injury resurfacing, Pelletier wasn't surprised.

"The body can compensate for all kinds of little traumas in life, but one day it just can't compensate anymore, even with kids. No one is immune."

Pelletier explained that a person's posture, the natural curves of the spinal column, "give the body stability and strength" and "allows the nervous system to function optimally."

"It controls everything, so a healthy nervous system is extremely important," he said.

In Walbourne's case, he has twist in his neck that stretches his spinal cord and puts pressure on his brain stem that cause severe headaches and

potentially numbness.

In addition to undergoing regular spinal adjustments, Pelletier said people with conditions such as Walbourne's can benefit from performing a series "big stretches" that helps alleviate the feeling of "being stuck" in a bad posture.

The third prong of Pelletier's approach to treating Walbourne is laser therapy.

Pelletier explained that laser therapy exposes cells and tissues to wavelengths of light that are absorbed and create biochemical energy which helps relieve inflammation and encourages cell regeneration in muscles, joints and ligaments.

"Combined with structural correction, the result of laser therapy is really, really good," Pelletier said,

adding that it's a good alternative for those who are intolerant of drugs.

The plan is to continue treating Walbourne for the next month or so, then reassess based on the patient's progress.

After his first few treatments, which started in late August, Walbourne said, "I couldn't believe how good well I felt," but then a coughing fit brought the pain back to the forefront.

Pelletier said Walbourne's treatment at Brant Pain Relief won't take his pain away overnight.

"There will be ups and downs for the first couple of months," Pelletier said. "It's going to be an emotional roller coaster that he has to go through first."

Walbourne said he appreciates being treated very honestly at the clinic.

He found it refreshing to hear that treatments at the clinic could take time to achieve any significant improvement, but he would rather be treated several times a month than get a shot of medicine and be told to come back in three months.

"Three months is a long time when you're in this much pain," Walbourne said.

Your Brant Connection will check up on the Phillip Walbourne's progress as he is treated at Brant Pain Relief in about a month.

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