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How Big of a Role Does Stress Play in Your Overall Level of Health?



Chiropractic revolves around the idea that stress, whether it be physical, chemical or emotional in nature, affects the body's ability to properly function and leads to poor health. More and more research keeps piling up to support this concept, but the short and long-term effects of stress are hardly ever addressed by the modern medical system. The medical community is not about to accept the theory that there is one cause for all disease (i.e. stress). This is contrary to every major medical premise. Yet this is exactly what happened in 1964 when Hans Selye, M.D. was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine!

In the 1950's, Dr. Selye studied the effect of stress on the human body and presented his work to the world in the concept of the "General Adaptation Syndrome," for which he won the 1964 Nobel Prize. This was a revolutionary concept of mental and physical illness and it was, at the time, acclaimed as the most important and far-reaching idea in the history of medicine...that STRESS is the cause of all disease.

In his book, "The Stress of Life," Selye described how, as a medical student, he first noticed that the early signs of many illnesses were identical---loss of energy and appetite, generalized aches and pains, and so on. He wondered why these vague symptoms were taken for granted by his instructors. Years of research gradually led him to realize that these commonly related symptoms were actually part of a pattern, the arousing of the body's resistance to a stress-causing agent. It did not matter whether the stressor came from a mechanical, chemical, nutritional, biological, or even emotional source. The body always reacted in an identical manner.

According to Selye, the body produces an alarm reaction to any form of stress that threatens its well-being. Unless the stress is unusually strong, we are not even aware of the body's response. This initial alarm reaction is followed by a period of

adaptation to the stress, or compensation, if the stress continues unabated. This process will continue until the body's vital energy is exhausted and symptoms become apparent. It is at this point that the patient usually seeks help but usually from an over-the-counter remedy at the pharmacy, not in a doctor's office. If the symptoms continue and the body's ability to maintain normal function becomes more exhausted, professional help must be sought. For most problems, the process is a slow and gradual slide into a disease that can be measured and eventually named. The diseased person then becomes, we are told, the exclusive property of the medical and insurance communities.



I don't have a problem with disease and degeneration coming under the medical umbrella. That is what medical professionals are trained to deal with. I do have difficulty with the concept of their ability to recognize disease before a pathological process can be identified. The truth is, the patient must be diseased (quantified and qualified) before medicine can hope to be effective. Otherwise, it is just guesswork. Chiropractic can be applied to anyone to improve the overall health of the individual, regardless if symptoms are present or not. In this respect, chiropractic is a universal health care option, whereas medicine is limited to treating disease rather than restoring health. There is a HUGE difference.

Every diseased patient has already gone through the periods of stress, alarm, reaction, adaptation or compensation, and exhaustion BEFORE the disease was named and specific therapy begun. It is during this period of time, however short or long it may be, that a chiropractor--using a careful case history and examination--can identify the stress for the patient and assist in its removal. In this way, disease can be prevented and an enormous service rendered to humanity, a service medicine is unable to provide.

I would like to close by quoting from Dr. Selye's book:

“Apparently, disease is not just suffering, but a fight to maintain the homeostatic balance of our tissues, despite damage...Could all of this vagueness be translated into the precise terms of modern medical science? Could it point a way to explore whether or not there is some non-specific defense system built into our body, a mechanism to fight any kind of disease?”

Chiropractic deals with this inborn defense system, and complements the body's inherent ability to heal itself when there is no interference to the function of the nervous system.