

# The Role of Chiropractic Care in the Treatment of Post-Polio Syndrome

(Or) Don't Get Bent out of Shape (Or) A Twist in the Tale  
(Or) Hold Your Horses

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You may think that these are odd titles for an article about Post Polio Syndrome. However, I think they accurately describe the situations that occur in the structure of a person with PPS.

If you are reading this article, it probably means that you are experiencing some degree of the weakness and atrophy that the polio virus leaves in its wake. Many of you have had periods of stability followed by a return of symptoms.

So look, all of those muscles who live with you are tired! The polio affected areas of your body are weak and all activity is hard for them. Your stronger side is doing double duty. Picture a team of six horses pulling a carriage. Three of these horses are weaker and they are on the right side. The three stronger horses are on the left. What happens when you say giddy up? Of course the carriage will tend to pull left and the horses on the left will pull most of the weight (the strong side of your body). The horses on the right have to keep up and try to straighten you out to keep some balance so your carriage doesn't run off the road. And because of the asymmetrical pull, the framework of the carriage gets distorted.

If muscles are horses then this unbalanced scenario leads to micro and macro damage to muscle tendon and fiber and causes the formation of trigger points.

A trigger point (TP) is a hypersensitive area in a muscle that causes local pain, referred pain and often a noticeable twitch response when it is compressed. The discomfort of a TP is thought to be due to the presence of specific body chemicals such as histamine, serotonin and others. Trigger points are the result of injury, poor posture and repetitive strain. TPs are called ACTIVE, meaning that they are causing you pain now or LATENT which will be activated under certain circumstances. According to Dr. Janet Travell, author of the landmark book Myofascial Pain and Dysfunction, "latent TPs may persist for years after apparent recovery from injury; it predisposes to acute attacks of pain since minor overstretching, overuse or chilling of the muscle may suffice to reactivate it. Both latent and active TPs cause dysfunction; only active TPs cause pain." TPs may also be reactivated by other TPs arthritic joints, organ disease and emotional stress. Pain causes muscle spasm and so the pain-spasm cycle is born.

In addition, the aberrant contraction patterns lead to distortion in the skeletal framework of the body and eventual joint degeneration.

This is where chiropractic care can be helpful.

My job when I treat the post polio patient is to correct the skeletal distortions through low force corrections to the spine and extremities. I use a technique called the Directional Non-Force Technique which employs a light pressure testing procedure followed by a gentle thumb thrust. I also treat the trigger points using manual ischemic compression, basically a compression/release technique.

## The Role of Chiropractic Care (continued)

Ah.....carrots for the horses!

Yes, there is a tendency to have recurring problems because of the underlying neurologic condition. But chiropractic, physical therapy and other techniques; such as acupuncture and meditation can help your carriage get to its destination.

Dr. Burke has been treating patients in the Jamison/Furlong area for 26 years.

