

In attendance: Chiropractor Robert Cowin, D.C.
Chiropractic assistant: Julie Ivanovska

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“NECK BRIDGE” ON THE RIVER KWAI: My Chinese Pillow



Mrs Carolyn Chapman, Figtree, holding her wooden “neck bridge”

I first met my “neck’s best friend” on a holiday in Thailand in 1989, on a day trip up the River Kwai at a place called Kanchanaburi. An old gentleman was whittling away at pieces of wood. I questioned my Thai companion as to what he was making. Her reply, in limited English, was “Very, very good for back and head”. With this endorsement and because locals seemed to be purchasing them, I commissioned this craftsman to make one for me. He looked long and hard at my neck and commenced chiselling and chipping. Soon he had produced a very smooth shape that took on the look of a pair of female breasts. I was aghast and somewhat diffident about accepting the finished article, but did so.

Back at the hotel I tried my new “toy”, mistakenly positioning it at my lower spine. It was grossly uncomfortable. I persisted as I thought “no pain, no gain”. A hotel maid came into my room and laughed at seeing this piece of wood jacking up my lumbar region. She then got down on the floor to demonstrate the correct way to position this “thing” under the neck.

On returning home to Australia, I would spasmodically use the wooden pillow, but eventually it was pushed to the back of the cupboard

(Continued on page 2)

SELF-REPAIR



Mrs Jo Hochberger, Austinmer

Using awareness exercise on the self-help audiotape has been a revelation to me. I never expected a simple self-observation procedure could have such beneficial results.

I first visited Cowin Chiropractic Clinic over 25 years ago, suffering from debilitating sinus headaches.

With chiropractic adjustments and self-help I overcame that problem.

Since then, my ability to overcome a few other serious health problems is I’m sure due to the fact that I have followed advice on a number of self-help programmes and particularly, of late, the Feldenkrais awareness-through-movement exercise on the self-help audiotape.

By using the tape I have gradually increased my ability both to hold my adjustment and increase my range of neck movements. If I feel that some part of my body is not as good as it was yesterday I lie on the floor and use the tape. When I get up I find an immediate improvement which continues over several hours.

At first this amazed me but since it has happened repeatedly I have come to the conclusion that given a chance the body will operate its own repair mechanisms. I have come to accept that my brain is indeed a wonderful computer

Chiropractor’s report on Jo: Jo has learned to detect spinal tiredness early and has earned a high level of health self-management success. R.C.

CLINIC NEWS

There are three possible changes here in the 24 weeks ahead:

1. The Clinic will close for three months on Friday, 4 August 2006 and reopen on a part-time basis on Monday 30 October 2006, or
2. The Clinic will be taken over by a new chiropractor before 4 August 2006, or
3. The Clinic will close permanently on Friday, 4 August 2006.

If you wish a family member or friend to begin care here in the next 24 weeks it would be prudent to book in soon because a normal trial of chiropractic care runs for 12 weeks. Also, please prepare them in advance with information on the benefits and costs they may expect and the self-help skills they will need to develop. Self-help skills, as illustrated in this newsletter, will be a major emphasis for all visits in the weeks ahead.

One-week holiday in April

The clinic will be closed for one week in April from Monday 17 April to Friday 21 April 2006.

New fees

The annual fee increase came into effect on Monday 20 February 2006 and is approximately 3.1%, corresponding to the latest CPI.

Adjustment visits are now \$49.50 and new patient’s costs for the first four visits total \$502.00.

SPECIAL PILLOWS



Photo above shows a way of making your own Chinese pillow.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1 - "NECK BRIDGE"
ON THE RIVER KWAI: My Chinese Pillow)

and forgotten (like all holiday "must haves"). Taking painkillers was so much easier for stiff necks and resultant headache. I was too busy to spend time lying supine with this thing supporting my neck.

In the 36 years since a "whiplash" injury in a motor vehicle accident, I had suffered from stiff necks, headaches and frequent bouts of vertigo. Also, in the past two years I have developed constant, intrusive tinnitus. I had sought relief from GPs, specialists, physiotherapy, osteopathy, massage and reflexology. Then recently and rather desperately I made an appointment with a chiropractor.

I was impressed and frustrated by all the preparation undertaken before I was accepted as a patient because I was anxious to get started. "Just bring it on!"

Also, I was sceptical about the importance attributed to the Chinese Pillow, but I found benefit almost immediately.

Nowadays, using a Chinese Pillow is quite addictive and my taste in music has benefited. I frequently "drift off" to Mozart, Vivaldi and Beethoven. Sometimes when I feel really zingy, Rod Stewart is included to add zest to the day.

My 1989 wooden model occasionally gets used, especially when I want to relive my holiday in Thailand, but the newer version in foam rubber is my favourite.

Summary

I certainly do not have those wretched attacks of vertigo (sometimes 4-5 in any day). Now I have the occasional one but am able to deal with it, usually by adjusting my posture. Also, these only happen when I have not been as diligent with my Chinese Pillow (methinks there is a message there!).

Headaches are a thing of the past (unless I indulge in some poor-quality red wine). Alas! My tinnitus is still hanging in there but is not a major problem. Initially I rated its severity at a 7 out of 10 and nowadays rate it at a 4. It doesn't stop me sleeping and I am only really aware of it in the quiet of the early morning and late evening. I

play soft music if it becomes too intrusive.

I am grateful to my chiropractor for having listened to my problems with apparent empathy and for teaching me self-evaluation to deal with my lopsided body.

Chiropractor's report on Carolin:

VERTIGO FOR 36 YEARS AFTER "WHIPLASH" NECK INJURY

Mrs Carolin Chapman, retired nurse and laser therapist, first visited this clinic seven months ago. She reported a history of continuing neck pain, occasional headaches and intermittent seasons of vertigo since a "whiplash" motor-vehicle accident 36 years earlier.

At that first visit her current season of vertigo had been more or less continuous for six months and involved bouts of unsteadiness lasting from one to 30 seconds about four or five times day. *Other more-recent symptoms included continuing left-ear tinnitus, a mild-to-moderate bilateral sensorineural hearing loss, slightly worse in the left ear, and a single four-hour bout of amnesia.*

For two years preceding the first visit, she had had consultations with GPs and specialists (in neurology and ear, nose and throat). Many tests and imaging studies had failed to identify a likely cause of the symptoms, but possible diagnoses of "transient global amnesia" (TGA), "complicated migraine" and "Meniere's disease" had been tentatively offered by the specialists.

Upper-cervical orthogonal (U.C.O.) X-rays were taken here. In each of the three planes, small angulations between the joints of the skull and the upper-neck bones seemed to be present. These angulations were interpreted as probable vertebral misalignments. Considered with Carolin's "whiplash" accident history, treatment history and other findings of mild postural distortion, left hand weakness, pain on neck palpation and leg-length imbalance (LLI), it seemed to me likely that an upper-cervical spine disorder (subluxation) was present and relevant to her troubles.

Carolin then began receiving regular instrument chiropractic adjustments here and doing regular Chinese-pillow neck-resting at home. She has reported significant improvements as detailed in her story above. As also demonstrated in Jo's story, Carolin has learned about and earned a lot of self-help health. R.C.

(Continued from page 1 – Special Pillows)



A Chinese pillow is meant to support the natural curve (lordosis) of the neck.

An earlier version of the Chinese pillow used here about 30 years ago was known as Edd's Neck Bridge.¹

At that time, we didn't know about neck bridges from the River Kwai.

The Chinese Pillow seems to have been in use in China for at least 400 years. In about 1970 a patient showed me an antiques catalogue which included a picture of a pair of pillows made of jade dating from the Ming dynasty shaped like buddhas resting on all fours and priced at about \$4000 each.

Apparently some people don't leave home without a pillow. In a conversation with a widely traveled lecturer from the University of Wollongong in about 1995, I learned that members of some of the Turkana tribes of the Northern Kenyan desert near Lake Turkana "wear" a wooden neck support on their wrists and it is "almost their only clothing and luggage".²

The online encyclopaedia Encarta says that "**Wooden headrests, used instead of a pillow to support the head and neck during sleep, have been an important household item in much of Africa**".³

"They vary in construction and comfort. Some 'pillows' are curved branches embedded in soil. Compared to stone 'beds' nomadic people have constructed elsewhere around the lake, the wood pillows are goosedown. The stone version consists of a wall to break the wind and a headrest to snuggle up to. On a five-star scale, the wood pillow gets a minus five, the rocks a minus ten".⁴

For thousands of our patients over the past 37 years, however, the Chinese Pillow rates a plus ten. R.C.

¹That version was named by us after its manufacturer and supplier, Edd Berwick of Wollongong.

²(The late) Dr Toni O'Neill, Department of Biology, University of Wollongong.

³http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_7615748_05_2/African_Art_and_Architecture.html#p12

⁴<http://www.romartraveler.com/RomarPages/LakeTurkana-Quinet>.

(Then search for Lake Turkana).