



Diane's Story

A perfect example of incorrectly diagnosed myofascial dysfunction occurred in the case of Diane, a former client. Diane was afraid she had cancer. I was working as a licensed massage therapist for Focus Massage, a specialty group associated with Nova Care Physical Therapy, when I met her. She told me how she had fallen backward in her office chair and hit her head on the floor. After two months, she began feeling pain in her back. Her doctor prescribed muscle relaxers and pain pills. The medication did not provide lasting relief and Diane was unhappy with the side effects. Her doctor recommended a chiropractor. The chiropractic treatment worked temporarily but the pain returned. She tried physical therapy with similar results. When I met her, her alternatives had been exhausted. She was frustrated by chronic pain and diminished hope.

Diane's untreated muscle dysfunction had led her down a dangerous path. She had begun highly invasive testing at her doctor's recommendation. She was tested for colon and kidney cancer. At this point, her hair started falling out. Her mental and emotional stress was wreaking havoc on her body. She began walking with a cane.

On Diane's first massage therapy visit with me, I questioned her further about her fall from the chair. I concluded that she had also hit her hip and gluteus maximus ("glute") muscles. I figured she probably had trigger points in her lower back, glute and psoas muscles. When I suggested a trigger point massage, Diane said she was ready to try anything.

It was no wonder she was in pain! I found trigger points in her piriformis, glutes, psoas, iliac crest and quadratus lumborum muscles. After fifty minutes of trigger point therapy, Diane got off the massage table herself. She walked across the room without her cane and without her pain. After her initial elation and amazement, she was mad, "Why didn't my doctor recommend this?" I explained that some doctors do recommend trigger point therapy, and that most major auto insurance companies cover trigger point massage therapy with a doctor's prescription, but sometimes it is necessary for the patient to request the treatment.

Before Diane left, I urged her to drink a lot of water. When you release trigger points you are also releasing toxins into the bloodstream, which accumulate as a result of poor circulation in and around congested muscles. Releasing these toxins into the bloodstream can produce a sickening feeling in the stomach but water flushes it from the system.

Within a month of trigger point treatment Diane was fully recovered from an ailment that the best of academic medicine failed to diagnose. Currently Diane runs five miles a day thanks to trigger point therapy and a skillful practitioner. The pain relief and subsequent stress relief, combined with vitamin and herbal supplements, have helped her stop losing her hair.