

Chronic whiplash pain can result in psychological distress

Question: I have had consistent neck and head pain for almost 6 months since my whiplash injury from an auto accident. I now feel depressed and anxious.

Could my psychological distress be related to my pain?

Answer: Chronic pain or consistent pain over an extended period of a few weeks to even months or years can create psychological stress. Constant pain, whether mild or severe, interferes with our quality of life. Happy positive people with great dispositions are no match for chronic pain. The pain wears us down physically and emotionally.

Whiplash symptoms are especially irritating to our psyche because of their close proximity to the brain. The higher up in the body our pain and the closer the injured tissue is to the brain the greater the degree of pain and interference. Our neurons (nerve cells) are highly concentrated near the brain, upper spine, face and jaw. As we move distal (away from the skull) the concentration of nerve cells dissipates. A whiplash injury is very serious concern even in a mild fender bender. Considering the origin of the nerve supply originates in the brain and spine, any trauma to these regions can directly or indirectly affect the rest of the body. Typically the posterior and/or anterior neck muscles and ligaments are sprained or strained in a whiplash accident. The jaw muscles are usually triggered in most of these conditions because when the neck muscles are weak or irritated the jaw muscles compensate by contracting to maintain the head upright. Undue weight bearing on the jaw muscles can lead to headaches and facial pain. This syndrome of pain results in a very distressing scenario for the

whiplash sufferer. Distal pain in the extremities is obviously not fun either but pain in the face neck and head are riveting due to the high concentration of nerves and the residual affects on all our senses we depend on a moment-to-moment day-to-day basis.

Chiropractors are specially trained in dealing with whiplash syndromes and their associated pain and psychological effects. There are natural solutions in most cases so seek the advice of a chiropractor.

Quote of the week: *“Strong lives are motivated by dynamic purposes.”* –

Kenneth Hildebrand