

The Perrin Technique

Notes on a talk given by Phil Heler BSc, member of the General Osteopathic Council, to members of Sheffield M.E. Group on 31 March 2008.

Phil told us that this is a technique developed by the osteopath Raymond Perrin. Full explanations can be read in Dr Perrin's book '**The Perrin Technique: how to beat chronic fatigue syndrome / M.E.**' which is available in our library, and there is also an interesting website at www.theperrinclinic.com.

Dr Perrin developed the technique after treating a cyclist who became affected by CFS. Looking at the problem from an osteopath's point of view, and being interested in function and structure, he noted **problems in the mid-thoracic spine**. He treated this area specifically, and to his surprise the cyclist's CFS disappeared. This prompted him to research his treatments on others with CFS (at the University of Salford in conjunction with the University of Manchester) and in 2005 the study provided strong evidence that an important component of CFS involves a disturbance of the body's lymphatic drainage system. This was a small but significant piece of research which has been taken seriously by many people in the NHS.

Phil is now one of 20 or so osteopaths in the UK whom Raymond Perrin has trained in the technique. Phil has a scientific background, with his first degree being in Food Science and Human Nutrition. ME/CFS of course is a complex illness, or range of illnesses, which are not yet fully understood medically. Phil himself was drawn to study ME/CFS when some time ago one of his close friends was 'stopped in her tracks' by it.

The Perrin technique sees ME/CFS as a disorder of the Sympathetic Nervous System and the Lymphatic System.

The Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) is the part of the autonomic nervous system which regulates metabolic functions which are not under conscious control, such as the digestive system. It operates as a network which determines "how much power goes to the end appliances". For instance, the sympathetic nervous system

- enables the pupils of the eye to dilate (people with ME/CFS are often light sensitive),
- supplies the inner ear (people with ME/CFS are often sensitive to loud noise)
- controls body temperature response (people with ME/CFS often have poor temperature control).

The SNS emerges from the spinal cord in the area of the thoracic spine and this was what originally led Perrin to develop his technique after treating the cyclist. There are other centres where nerves meet and diverge, called plexuses, for instance the celiac (solar) plexus and the cardiac plexus, as well as many sympathetic nerves in the neck and back, and these are also addressed during a Perrin treatment.

The Lymphatic System is the body's mechanism for removing waste products from the cells and bloodstream. Tiny lymph vessels run alongside the blood vessels, not with any propulsion of their own but stimulated by the pulsing of the blood vessels. The lymph vessels carry the lymph fluid towards two main ducts in the upper chest which in turn direct the fluid to the liver and kidneys for processing and expulsion. Perrin says that in ME/CFS, the lymphatic system does not work properly especially in the parts which prevent backflow of lymph. The reason for this is not known but it may be connected with the dysfunction of the SNS. This dysfunction can even be shown in some cases on the surface of the body, and Phil showed us photographs of 'varicose lymphatics', where lymph was actually collecting under the skin of the upper chest rather than being drawn towards the lymph ducts. Manual drainage of this area is a key part of the Perrin technique.

Another main area of concern is the brain. Toxic matter is taken away from the brain not by lymph but by **cerebrospinal fluid** which drains towards an area behind the bridge of the nose called the cribriform plate. The centre of control of hormonal activity is the hypothalamus, located in the brain and already implicated in the pattern of ME/CFS by other studies. It is obviously important that the full function of the cerebrospinal fluid is maintained.

Phil said that the process by which the SNS breaks down in ME/CFS is not yet fully understood. There seem to be various **predispositions and triggers** including mechanical predisposition (the cyclist), postural trauma (whiplash), emotional trauma, immunological trauma (viruses) and environmental trauma (airborne and other pollutants).

The Perrin treatment plan **includes nutrition** and recommends two specific supplements: essential fatty acids, specifically VegEPA, and Juice Plus, for antioxidants. **Essential fatty acids** help correct damage within the brain and **antioxidants** help deal with toxicity caused by malfunction of the lymphatic system. More information about these can be found on <http://www.healthyme.co.uk> or by phoning local nutrition advisers and distributors Dr Fiona Harker or Jo Ventham BSc on 0845 094 4085.

Phil told us that an experienced osteopath using the Perrin Technique can actually **diagnose ME/CFS**, identifying by palpation the typical blockages of the lymphatic system. This is not yet possible within the NHS.

The treatment consists of manual lymphatic drainage in the areas of the chest, back, neck and spine, together with cranial osteopathy to optimise drainage of cerebrospinal fluid.

- Patients are screened to ensure that the usual tests have been carried out in order to rule out other illnesses which may produce similar symptoms (i.e. the NHS tests required by the CFS clinics)
- At the initial consultation, patients are given a hand-out preparing them for possible side effects which may even include a full-blown recurrence of the worst symptoms.
- A course of 12 half hour treatments is recommended. This takes approximately 3 months and is followed by a review and reassessment.
- The first session includes the full consultation, which takes one and a half hours and is charged accordingly.
- Patients are given a self-care handout which includes a self-massage routine of the chest, back (by a friend or partner), head and neck as well as mobilisation exercises for the thoracic spine. Drinking sufficient fluids is recommended.
- Phil's treatments at the Wainwright Therapy Centre in Sheffield cost £34 for each half hour session (whilst treatments by Raymond Perrin at his Manchester clinic cost in excess of £60).

Phil emphasised that the treatment is not aimed merely at symptom control but at overall improvement and, in many cases, recovery. Speaking for himself, since January 2007 when he started using this technique for people with ME/CFS, 3 of his patients have made a full recovery. He said however that because of the diversity of the illness and the need for sub-grouping, it does not work for all patients with ME/CFS. **The Wainwright Therapy Centre** can be seen at <http://w-tc.com> - telephone (0114) 255 20 48.