

NEW SCOLIOSIS TREATMENT AVAILABLE

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Friday, August 1, 2008 – Wyoming News

A COLORADO CHIROPRACTOR WAS TRAINED IN A NEW TREATMENT METHOD THAT IS ATTRACTING CLIENTS FROM CHEYENNE.

CHEYENNE – Scoliosis patients have few options.

The abnormal spinal curve affects about 4.5 percent of the population, causing back pain, headaches and fatigue. In severe cases, the disorder produces breathing difficulties and digestive disruptions.

Patients could choose to wear a back brace for 16 to 23 hours a day. They could undergo surgery. Or, they could endure the discomfort until it becomes unbearable.

Cheyenne resident Deb Hayden said she struggled with severe scoliosis pain for a year when she decided to see a surgeon.

But she didn't like the idea of living with metal rods in her spine.

"It seems like such a strange thing in this day and age," she said.

But some chiropractors are becoming trained in a nonsurgical treatment developed by the Clear Institute, a group of chiropractic physicians.

The noninvasive approach is attracting Cheyenne patients like Hayden to the Spine Correction Center of the Rockies in Fort Collins, Colo.

Dr. Michael Farrell said he completed the training two years ago, and only 12 to 15 chiropractors carry the scoliosis specialty. The treatment can minimize or eliminate spinal curvatures. But patients must do their part.

"I like the ability to work with challenging cases, and scoliosis is as challenging as it comes," he said.

The approach can be described as mix, fix and set. Mix is where a chiropractor loosens the muscles, tendons and ligaments of the spine. The fix portion of the program involves a spinal adjustment, while the set part of the therapy attempts to lock the spine into its new position.

Patients visit the chiropractor two to three times a week for a new adjustment. They also complete exercises at home to strengthen the muscles that hold the spine in place.

Farrell said the method is not a quick fix. It could take several months to produce results.

Not everyone is a candidate for the program, and diagnostic X-rays are used to investigate the severity of the curvature.

He said a patient is no longer considered to have scoliosis if the curve drops below 10 degrees.

Hayden said she always dealt with back pain, but the discomfort has impacted her daily activities as she has gotten older. She added that her spine also would continue to curve at a rate of two degrees per year without intervention.

"I reached a point for me where I had to do something," she said. "I wanted a better quality of life."