

BOONE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL Physical Therapy offers unique treatment for back and neck pain: No medication, no surgery

Lower back and neck pain accounts for more than 3 million medical cases in the United States each year. Though a common ailment, it can affect every part of your life and have serious, long-term consequences if not accurately diagnosed and treated. It is estimated that at least 80% of people will experience low back pain. It is important to get treatment early for the best prognosis.

BMH through Rehab One, Ltd., a therapy staffing company, is very fortunate to have on staff Mike Elliott, PT, DPT, OCS, Cert. MDT. He is one of only a few PTs in West Virginia who is diplomate in the McKenzie Method of treating back and neck pain, which combines mechanical assessment, exercise, self-management, patient education and empowerment in lieu of spending months in therapy, buying expensive equipment or relying on invasive methods like injections or surgery.

The McKenzie Method is effective for a variety of musculoskeletal problems, including pain in the back, neck and extremities (i.e., shoulder, knee, ankle, etc.), as well as issues associated with sciatica, sacroiliac joint pain, arthritis, degenerative disc disease, muscle spasm and intermittent numbness in the hands and feet.

Developed and introduced in the 1950s by physiotherapist Robin McKenzie of New Zealand, the McKenzie Method is a technique that allows patients to learn the principles of their pain and empowers them to be in control their own symptom management through extensive assessment and exercise-based treatment options.

The program begins with a thorough assessment of the patient, which includes how they stand, bend, walk and lie down. Each of these movements has a strong effect on the presenting symptoms. The answers to these questions help Mr. Elliott, PT, DPT, OCS, Cert. MDT, figure out what treatment and prevention strategies may be beneficial for them. Based on their responses in the assessment, Mr. Elliott, PT, DPT, OCS, Cert. MDT can give the patient self-treatment recommendations that, more often than not prove to be very effective in reducing and or eliminating their back or neck pain. The programs designed are individualized for each patient.

The McKenzie Method also aims to be effective in the least number of treatment sessions. By minimizing the number of visits to the doctor and giving patients the knowledge and tools needed to manage their own pain symptoms this approach eliminates the dependency on both the physician and more rigorous medical interventions.

Behavioral changes are also part of the process. Posture is a huge contributor to lower back and neck pain. It is important to help the patient change postures and positions. Education and understanding of the mechanics allows the patient to be more compliant with the treatment plan.

Patients that have one episode of back pain are more likely to experience back pain again at some point, so understanding mechanics and what to do immediately will have more rapid and long term positive effects. As physical therapists, we have experienced improved outcomes by teaching the patient to be independent in the management of low back and neck pain. If you are a patient experiencing neck or low back pain, ask your physician to refer you to Boone Memorial Hospital Physical Therapy (304) 369-5719.

Goals of the McKenzie Method

- **Accurately understand the patient's presentation and behavior of symptoms**
- **Determine the most appropriate and effective treatment plan**
- **Eliminate symptoms and restore full function**
- **Empower the patient to self-treat and prevent recurrences**
- **Help inform patients if other medical advice or testing is needed**

Source: The McKenzie Institute* USA