

Is your aching wrist really a pain in the neck?

Hand and forearm numbness/pain may be Carpal Tunnel Syndrome but often the real cause is in the neck

By Jo Schloeder

What do Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh and Manasquan-based graphic designer Jean Smith have in common? Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS). Both Smith and His Royal Highness have suffered from the numbing pain that shoots up from the palm into the forearm, yet Jean jokes their causes are likely different.

“The London newspapers reported that Prince Phillip probably developed carpal tunnel from ‘physical demands placed on the wrists during carriage driving,’” she says with a smile. “Mine was considerably less glamorous – it was from constant use of the keyboard and mouse. All I know is it hurt.”

That is until Smith searched out the advice of Dr. Tony Garrow of Garrow Family Chiropractic, Sea Girt, who developed a holistic plan of massage, physical therapy and chiropractic care to relieve Jean’s pain without the use of surgery or drugs. The result? A happy, pain-free Jean who didn’t have to suffer the invasive and scarring surgery the Queen’s husband recently endured.

But, Dr. Garrow reports, many people who come to his office thinking they suffer from CTS have actually been misdiagnosed and find the real cause of the pain is coming from their neck.

“So many people are misdiagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome but actually have a pinched nerve in the neck area. I have had many patients with nerve-related hand and finger pain and numbness that received dramatic relief from chiropractic care to the neck,” he says.

What is CTS?

According to the National Institutes of Health, carpal tunnel syndrome occurs when the median nerve, which runs from the forearm into the hand, becomes pinched or squeezed at the wrist. When the *carpal tunnel*, a passageway or “tunnel” of ligament and bones at the base of the hand which houses the median nerve, becomes irritated or swollen it can become narrow causing the nerve to be compressed. The result can be

numbness, piercing pain, and weakness that starts in the fingers or hand and can shoot up through the wrist to the arm.

Though many people may be genetically predisposed to carpal tunnel syndrome (the “tunnel” is just smaller in some people than in others), other contributing factors include injury or trauma to the wrist such as a sprain or fracture, arthritis, work-related stress, repeated use of hand tools, fluid retention during pregnancy or menopause, etc. At higher risk are people with obesity and diabetes.

The National Institutes of Health says that women are three times more likely than men to develop carpal tunnel syndrome.

Why the misdiagnosis?

According to Dr. Garrow, misdiagnosis is fairly common because CTS and a pinched nerve can produce very similar pain and numbness from the fingers to the shoulder. He says, however, that although the symptoms may be similar, the treatment is very different. Of utmost importance is the proper testing leading to an accurate diagnosis.

He says that in many cases, the root cause of the problem is overall poor posture which puts pressure on the nerves going down the arm. As specialists in posture rehabilitation, Dr. Garrow and his staff are experts in correcting posture issues and relieving posture-related pain syndromes.

“Though a pinched nerve and carpal tunnel may fool the patient, they don’t fool us,” he adds. He went on to say that at Garrow Family Chiropractic they use the most high-tech testing and x-rays to determine if the symptoms are emanating from the neck or the wrist area.

“We can absolutely pinpoint the difference,” Dr. Garrow adds. “Depending

on the diagnosis, we treat the hand, wrist, arm or neck with chiropractic care, physical therapy and/or massage,” which is covered by most insurance plans.

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Says Dr. Garrow, at the end of the day, the most important thing is relieving the pain and discomfort his patients are feeling.

“In a very small number of cases surgery is the only option,” he says, “but nearly everyone else who suffers from CTS or a pinched nerve can benefit from the holistic, non-invasive care that chiropractic is known for. That’s what we do best.”

Garrow Family Chiropractic was voted best chiropractor in Monmouth County three years in a row by the readers of the Asbury Park Press. For more information, go to www.GarrowChiropractic.com or contact Dr. Garrow at 732-223-1990.



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