

Quon et al. Lumbar Intervertebral Disc Herniation: Treatment by Rotational Manipulation. Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, Volume 12, Number 3, June, 1989.

Abstract: We describe the case of a patient with a lumbar disc herniation who underwent a course of side posture manipulation. Despite the appearance of an enormous central herniation on the CT scan, the patient improved considerably during only 2 wk of treatment. The disparity which so commonly exists between radiological and clinical findings is depicted in this case. Further, it is emphasized that manipulation has been shown to be an effective treatment for some patients with lumbar disc herniation. While complications of this form of treatment have been reported in the literature, such incidents are rare.

Introduction: There is a general consensus among contemporary orthopedists that, for most patients with lumbar or lumbosacral disc herniation, a trial of conservative treatment is preferable initially over surgical intervention (1). According to Nachemson, (2) more than 50% of patients with sciatica will be greatly improved with conservative care. It has been reported that 70% of patients with low back pain, in general, improve within a few weeks, irrespective of the type of treatment given, and that as high as 90% improve within 2 months (2). With respect to lumbar disc herniations, Weber (3) demonstrated that although patients improve more quickly with surgery, the long-term surgical results are not significantly better than treatment with bed rest, exercise, and back school.

Although caution must be exercised in interpreting single case studies, this paper describes a patient who presented with an L4-L5 disc herniation. The size of the lesion revealed by CT examination was so great that one would not expect a favorable response to conservative measures. However, the patient was rendered pain-free within 2 weeks by daily manipulations. The enormous size of the disc herniation did not seem to influence the clinical result. Had a trial of conservative therapy not been prescribed, he may well have undergone an unnecessary surgical procedure. Furthermore, a repeat CT scan, 4 months after the initial episode, showed no change in the size or position of the disc herniation.