

Notes from GBS/CIDP Colorado Statewide/Regional Meeting
St. Anthony Central Hospital, Birch Room
May 5, 2007

Dr. Peter G. Hanson, a medical doctor practicing in Denver, spoke at the annual statewide and regional GBS/CIDP support group meeting. Present were about 40 people consisting of GBS/CIDP patients and their families from Nebraska, the Western Slope – Delta and Grand Junction, Colorado Springs, and the greater Denver area. Coffee, hot and cold tea and a very special cake were served. Registration opened at 12:30PM and Dr. Hanson began an excellent presentation shortly after 1PM and concluded around 2:30PM.

Dr. Hanson began with a discussion on stress and how it affects our lives. Prior to beginning his presentation, Dr. Hanson had passed out many complimentary copies of his newly published book, “The NEW JOY of STRESS” to many patients and caregivers at the meeting (Thank you, Dr. Hanson). The book discusses the nature of stress and methodologies on dealing with stress. Dr. Hanson sees stress not just as a bad thing that is to be avoided but something that can be used to advantage. Stress is a natural human condition in which people can perform their best, if they are prepared both physically and mentally. Examples that Dr. Hanson gave included an example of a highly trained athlete that only performs their best when they are in actual competition versus in a training mode. The athlete needs the stress of top competition to achieve world records. Another example Dr. Hanson gave was that of a TV news anchor who may have trouble reading their lines before the broadcast but recites them perfectly once the red light of the camera is turned on them. So Dr. Hanson sees stress in one’s life as something that can be turned into a huge benefit instead of a fatal detriment.

Stress, to Dr. Hanson, is neutral. Stress has no agenda – either for the bad or the good. It’s just there. Not everybody reacts to stress in the same way. As Dr. Hanson was conducting his family practice in Toronto he was also observing his patients and learning what determines the outcome of a stressful situation from how people deal with stress. Dr. Hanson made reference to the “Hanson Scale of Stress Resistance” that is found in his book (Figure 3.2). The scale is made up of 10 weak choices that we might choose to make as we live our lives and 10 strong choices that we might also make. Each choice is given a numerical value. Your standing on the scale is the sum of all the points. Weak choices earn negative points and strong choices earn positive points. Possible weak choices (each is discussed in detail in the book) include bad genetics, insomnia, bad diet, obesity, unrealistic goals, poisons (including caffeine), smoking, the “wrong” job, financial distress, and an unstable home. “Strong” choices include good genetics, a sense of humor, the “right” diet, creating alternate stresses, having realistic goals, understanding the nature of one’s stress, having relaxation skills and efficient sleep, preparing thoroughly for one’s job, having financial security, and maintaining a stable home.

However, not all people are capable or are in a place where they can make all the right choices. So Dr. Hanson began studying alternative forms of stress and of treatments. Acupuncture is one such treatment. It is such a low level treatment that it has virtually no side-effects. Acupuncture produces both endorphins and cortisone. Endorphins are usually discussed when one is talking about long distance runners and how good they feel after around 7 miles of running. Their bodies have increased the levels of endorphins in their bodies. Cortisone is an anti-inflammatory produced naturally by our bodies and allows us to fight back against inflammation. Prednisone is an example of a corticosteroid that is made synthetically that is used often in treatment of CIDP. Dr. Hanson discussed studies in which levels of endorphins have been measured before and after an acupuncture treatment.

However, it turns out that our bodies do not produce enough cortisone to deal with all the stress and inflammation our bodies are under. Acupuncture simultaneously enhances the body’s production of

both endorphins and cortisone. So both the inflammation pain is reduced or eliminated and the person feels good. Dr. Hanson discussed the success rates of different pain relief treatments like vicodin (effective on ~25% of people), morphine (~50% effective), and general anesthesia (100% effective). Dr. Hanson believes that acupuncture is approximately 85% effective. However, since acupuncture originates in the Far East, some people in the western world are seduced by the high tech of western medicine and so have some resistance to accepting acupuncture as a realistic mode of treatment.

Medical acupuncture addresses the root cause of pain. Sugar causes inflammation including the nerves that are affected in GBS/CIDP. Alternative stress is a means by which the person takes their attention off one stress and puts it on another less traumatic, maybe more therapeutic, stress. Dr. Hanson has found alternative stresses to be a very beneficial mode of treatment for people under great stress.

Acupuncture treatment of pain and GBS in particular is a journey and just a one time treatment. Repeat treatments may be (likely) necessary. Acupuncture has been shown to be a very good treatment for pain management. An example location of an acupressure point is the nerve located in the muscle between the thumb and forefinger. Application of an acupuncture treatment is like taking a recess from chronic pain. The course of GBS/CIDP doesn't happen in a vacuum. Doctors must look at the whole picture of a person's life. People need to be enabled to control what they can in their lives and deal with what they can't. By controlling more of their lives people can increase their rate of recovery and have less pain at the same time. Even perception of control can be helpful.

Acupuncture has been shown to modify sciatica (reduce the pain and inflammation), cramps, fatigue (reduction in pain allows patients to get more effective sleep). Medical acupuncture can cause little bruises when administered.

Medical acupuncture is administered by traditionally trained medical doctors who have continued their medical education to include alternative treatments such as acupuncture. Medical doctors who perform acupuncture are associated with the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture. To find a practitioner in your area go to the Academy's website: <http://www.medicalacupuncture.org/>.

Treatment is covered by some insurance companies. At Dr. Hanson's practice the first treatment costs \$90 and subsequent treatments cost \$75. The number of sterilized needles used depends on the person and the nature of their pain.

Dr. Hanson ended the presentation with a question and answer session.

The next meeting of the Colorado GBS/CIDP Support group will be on the first weekend in October and the next meeting will be the first weekend in December.