



Local Chiropractor Favors Hands-On Treatment For Athletic Injuries

By JOHN VOKET

Keith Meyer really wants to compete in this year's Ironman Triathlon in Lake Placid, N.Y., but the well-trained and highly fit West Hartford athlete is betting on Dr Eugene Zeitler of Newtown Performance Chiropractic to get him there.

The former competitive cyclist is suffering from chronic knee pain that was brought on by the intense amount of running he has been doing as part of the preparatory training regiment. But thanks to Dr Zeitler, Mr Meyer now knows his knee pain is being caused by a weakness in his hip.

"He's training in a way that stresses out other related muscles, especially in his hips," explained Dr Zeitler. "Even though he's feeling the pain radiating from his knee up into the hip, the root of the problem isn't always where the most pain is being felt."

This in-depth knowledge of the human physiology, and how the body relates to the stresses and strains of playing and competing in sports, has helped the Brookfield native to develop a strong following among his patients, some who, like Mr Meyer, drive more than an hour each way for a 15- or 20-minute manipulation.

While Dr Zeitler has been successfully assisting patients at his first office in Sharon for several years, he is excited about the many referrals and friends he is meeting after just a few months in his new space at 153 South Main Street in Newtown. The chiropractor said that although 30 percent of his practice is handling spinal-related concerns, more and more of his patients are coming to Newtown because he is only one of a handful of professionals in Connecticut who is a master of Active Release Technique (ART).

According to Dr Michael Leahy, the founder of the program, ART is a patented, state-of-the-art soft tissue system/movement-based massage technique that treats problems with muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia, and nerves. Headaches, back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, shin splints, shoulder pain, sciatica, plantar fasciitis, knee problems, and tennis elbow are just a few of the many conditions that can be resolved quickly and permanently with ART.

These conditions all have one important thing in common: they are often a result of overused muscles. And apparently, there are a lot of overused muscles in Newtown.

"After just a few months, the Newtown practice is flourishing because this is a sports-minded community," Dr Zeitler said. The "performance chiropractor" sees patients ranging in age from high school to seniors, with many athletes including triathletes like Mr Meyer, competitive runners, high school and college sports participants, and weight lifters.

His use of ACT is combined with the basic training in chiropractic procedures, three years of postgraduate study in rehabilitation and an MA in nutrition. Dr Zeitler, who is also a certified personal trainer, said ACT involves more than 500 patented maneuvers designed to get his healing touch into the heart of the affected soft tissues.

He acquired the certification in ART over an intensive 13-day training program plus the study of numerous manuals and training DVDs that he refers to each time a patient introduces a new ache or pain.

"My philosophy is, I'm looking to correct the problem, whether it is scar tissue buildup or cellular changes in the muscle," he said. "By using ART to work on the tissue, I'm stimulating the breakdown of scar tissue buildup, reoxygenating the muscles, and even stimulating healthy cellular regrowth in some cases."

Billed as an alternative to surgery, ART is not only a healing art familiar to athletes, but to Fortune 500 industries as well. In fact, while he cannot say the name of the company, Dr Zeitler is on the cusp of becoming an in-house consultant to one of those prestigious companies.

"Utilizing ART on patients seen in the workplace has already reduced workers' comp claims in the workforces where it is being offered," he said. "In the case of employees suffering from conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome or other repetitive stress injuries, ART will allow the person to get rid of the numbness and tingling sensations they are experiencing, and get back to optimal health."

The value to employers can be worth millions in regained productivity alone, because, as he mentioned earlier, the root of the pain may not be the root of the problem, but the pain is certainly affecting the performance of most workers on the job and in their own private lives. And the surgical alternatives can lead to extensive absences during the recovery process, further impacting the bottom line.

"Before ART, if the patients failed to see results through other forms of conservative care, they would typically have to go in for a surgical procedure," Dr Zeitler said.

Besides ART, he also is a practitioner of MacKenzie Therapy. The McKenzie method of mechanical diagnosis and therapy is an active patient treatment philosophy that emphasizes prevention and intervention, and encourages patients to be in control of their own treatment.

Dr Zeitler said he appreciates this method because he can administer doctor-directed exercises to reduce herniated discs, which in turn, reduces spinal pain.



Enlarge image
Chiropractor Dr Eugene Zeitler demonstrates one of the exercises he teaches patients as part of the McKenzie method of mechanical diagnosis and therapy. Dr Zeitler recently opened a local office, Newtown Performance Chiropractic at 153 South Main Street.

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"If it's appropriate, I can set up patients to do the exercises themselves to help treat their pain, or as a preventative measure," he said.

In his rehabilitation practice, Dr Zeitler uses body weight training to help speed recovery, which he simply describes as "getting your muscles to do what you want them to do when you want them to do it."

The bottom line for every patient is education, he said.

"My goal is to educate the patient for life, so that they leave here and take all the knowledge with them to improve their life, their health, and their training," he said. "But I'm not so sports-oriented that I can't work with nonsport or athletic participants. Ultimately, the earlier anyone addresses the cause or root of their injuries, the better and faster they will be able to get back to a pain-free life."

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