You Asked...

I know your clinic does a lot of work with post-traumatic stress. Are you involved in any relief efforts for September 11th victims?

Therapist Response: Yes, we are. Our UI HealthPlex clinic is working with The Upledger Foundation to provide ongoing therapy for those directly affected by the recent tragic events in our nation. The Upledger Foundation has established The September 11 Healing Touch Fund: Providing Cranial-Sacral Therapy to Trauma Victims.

Donations will be directed to select Cranial-Sacral Therapy practitioners who will serve as authorized representatives of The Upledger Foundation in providing hands-on therapy to those who have been traumatized.

Donations are fully tax-deductible. For more information, call the Foundation at (561) 624-3888. To make a contribution, please make your check payable to The Upledger Foundation (reference Sept. 11 Healing Touch Fund, 11211 Prosperity Farms Rd., Suite D-223, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410-3487), and mail to: The Upledger Foundation, attn: Sept. 11 Healing Touch Fund, 11211 Prosperity Farms Rd., Suite D-223, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410-3487, or to www.abled.org. Questions are answered by UI staff therapists and appear on a space-available basis.

The Upledger Foundation is a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Your donation is fully deductible for income tax purposes. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the division of consumer services by calling toll-free 1-800-HELP-FLA within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state.

News From The Upledger Institute, Inc.*

UpClose

CRANIAL-SACRAL THERAPY BREAKS
20-YEAR CYCLE OF PTSD

For most of Steven Shumelda’s professional life, stress was a dominant factor. As a Naval hospital corpsman assigned to the Marine Corps in 1978, he survived a helicopter crash. Later, as a medical deep-sea diver with the Navy, he was given three to six months to live following what was believed to be a “toxic dive” that left his liver irreparably damaged. Life as a civilian continued the pattern of stress. His career took him from paramedic to operating room technician.

To hear that Steven Shumelda made it through those years may be surprising. To hear that he developed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is not.

The official diagnosis of “panic disorder” came in 1984 after Steven began experiencing a racing pulse and was shown to have high blood pressure. The treatment prescribed at the Dept. of Veterans Affairs hospital included medication — many varieties in an endless supply — designed to keep the body sedated. Steven opted for a different approach: an optimistic attitude, sheer determination, and the Eastern healthcare modalities he had begun studying after his helicopter crash.

Steven’s career focus in 1989 to massage therapy. He has been in private practice in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., since 1993.

Steven was able to survive many years this way — until January 2001, when his body’s coping mechanisms could no longer compensate. A 40-pound weight loss and tremendous pain in the area around his liver left him virtually unable to work.

Tests revealed that Steven’s liver enzymes were highly elevated. Doctors at the VA Medical Center diagnosed pancreatitis and gave Steven three options: “that wasn’t very good,” he says. “Surgery, drugs forever, or a liver transplant.” Once again Steven turned instead to complementary therapies — even though “doctors continually told me I was going to die.”

It was during this time that Steven heard about Cranial-Sacral Therapy and decided to take a class. A few days after experiencing the handson work, he says, “My pain stopped.”

Continued inside
The Role of CranioSacral Therapy in Treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

When I wrote this column, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, had not yet transpired. Never could I have imagined that therapy I had chosen would be so relevant for those affected by the event. With trauma of the magnitude our nation has experienced, we can expect to see an exponential rise in the incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the years to come.

It was in 1980 that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was first officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Volume III (DSM-III). Prior to that, the condition existed only under titles such as “shell shock,” “battle fatigue,” “disabling amnesia” and “psychoneurosis.” It wasn’t until the high incidence of PTSD in Vietnam veterans that finally prompted inclusion of the condition as mental disorder in the DSM-III.

Although combat veterans comprise a significant percentage of PTSD sufferers, combat should not be considered the singular cause of the disorder. It can result from any experience a person feels is life-threatening, terrifying or totally degrading. It can also result from viewing horrific or traumatic events that happen to others, especially loved ones. The symptoms of PTSD may occur days to years after the related event. Once begun, the symptoms oftentimes become chronic and last for years, decades, and often for the balance of a lifetime.

PTSD Has Physical Roots

Though classified as a mental disorder, PTSD has distinct physical origins. In our years of research and treatment of PTSD, we have encountered numerous symptoms that respond well to CranioSacral Therapy. Following are seven of the most prevalent symptoms and how we treat them:

1. Insomnia can result when the head and neck become jammed due to extreme backward or forward bending of the head during a traumatic occurrence. CST can help release these pressure points and improve the efficiency of fluid outflow at the occipital-cranial base [base of skull]. When successfully applied, insomnia significantly improves.

2. Hypervigilance is a state of heightened fear. The祈是 to respond well to CranioSacral Therapy. When successfully applied, insomnia significantly improves.

3. Intense thoughts continually interrupt a PTSD victim’s ability to concentrate. CST and its offshoots are used to balance fluids and release restrictions on the right and left sides of the brain, thus enhancing the circulation of both blood and cerebrospinal fluid. As a result, nutritional supplies to brain cells are improved and toxic waste products are removed.

4. Flashbacks are mental re-experiences of the horrific events that caused the PTSD initially. Unlike normal memories, they do not mellow with each recall, nor can they be described in words by the person experiencing them.

5. Long-term fear results in a person with PTSD becoming fearful of small things. In a subsequent visit to the UI HealthPlex clinic, Steven met with Dr. John Upledger, who discerned that his problem involved a number of body systems as well as PTSD.

CranioSacral Therapy works to alleviate the symptoms of PTSD. This time, Steven chose to take the doctor’s advice—a move he calls revelatory.

In a subsequent visit to the UI HealthPlex clinic, Steven met with Dr. John Upledger, who discerned that his problem involved a number of body systems as well as PTSD.

Steven quickly discovered that the physical and emotional repercussions from his traumatic were for more than he could have guessed. “I would never have thought that the body could sustain injuries so severe that wasn’t obvious,” he says. As a result of the helicopter crash, “My palatine bone [which forms part of the hard palate] had been shoved up about an inch into my jaw,” he explains. “CranioSacral Therapy and Visceral Manipulation loosened that stress.” (Steven believes that other membranes were also shoved upward at the time of the crash, thus resulting in all of his apparent liver trouble over the years. Doctors had never looked beyond the enzyme numbers in determining his problem.)

Steven has returned numerous times to the UI HealthPlex for follow-up Cranio-Sacral Therapy. “I’m settled, more balanced,” he says. “I’m back to full-time practice—alarge portion of which is now devoted to CranioSacral Therapy. The PTSD program also helped Steven deal with the emotion he had kept buried all those years, “It offers a healing, safe place to go to deal with traumas that you don’t really want to deal with,” he says.

Steady improvements continued in the days ahead. When I wrote this column, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, had not yet transpired. Never could I have imagined that the topic I had chosen would become so eerily relevant. As we begin the healing process, individually and as a nation, our thoughts and prayers remain especially with all those directly affected by this tragedy. The survivors of the attacks...