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Zero Balancing in the Chiropractic Practice

By Michele Doucette, DC, ZB Faculty

Authenticity, Passion, and Zero Balancing are my most effective strategies for patient retention and new patient referral...not pre-meditated scripts, bulk mailings, or spinal screenings. Not chasing after patients or convincing them they need my care. What works for me is:

1. Staying grounded in who I am, while growing in self-awareness and self-actualization.
2. A passionate thirst for learning about the nature of life, love, and healing.
3. A diversified body of work through which to explore, experience, and share #1 and #2.

Discovering the profound gifts of the leading-edge structural and energetic manual therapy Zero Balancing (ZB), and adding it to my chiropractic and nutrition practice, has unified my personal growth with the sustainability of my professional practice. Much of humanity is starving for wholeness, authenticity, and meaningful connection with ourselves, others, and something greater. Chiropractors are well positioned to be leaders in a true evolution of healthcare, especially if, as we continue to explore the various branches of our therapeutic repertoires, we stay connected to our vitalistic roots that are now more supported than ever by new findings in the fields of cell biology, neurophysiology, and biophysics.

The field of energy medicine is expanding rapidly, and the newer sciences are beginning to offer a vocabulary that will facilitate a quantum shift in how we perceive our human bodies (among other things). Chiropractors have been ahead of their time clinically, but a unified, integrated vocabulary has been lacking. We talk about innate intelligence in chiropractic philosophy classes and seminars, but when we go to the table, what does it mean? I remember being taught in technique lab that, as we take up tissue slack along a line of drive, we connect with the innate intelligence of the body before we deliver a thrust. That was about it. It had something to do with tissue slack and bringing a joint to tension, but I never heard any explanation about *why* that was connecting to innate intelligence or how I would know if I missed the connection. I think I was being asked to just know that it was there and trust that if I made

an adjustment it would be released, activated, or stimulated in some therapeutic way. And it probably is, in most cases, but here is the thing: somewhere along the line, the academic, theoretical, and practical instruction about the mechanics of touching innate intelligence was lost. It was not until I started studying Zero Balancing that the missing piece was restored, and I began to have a more meaningful conversation through tactile connection with the intelligence in another body. Zero Balancing explores the vocabulary, theory, and perceptive skills necessary to connect with the bioenergetic field through touch, and primarily through foundational joints in the skeletal system.

Developed by Fritz Frederick Smith, MD beginning in the early 1970s through the present day, Zero Balancing blends western concepts of anatomy and biomechanics with eastern theories of energy medicine and healing. Before dedicating his life work to Zero Balancing, Dr. Smith was an osteopathic medical doctor, acupuncturist, and Rolfer whose work was highly influenced by his studies of yogic traditions, tai chi, and meditation. Dr. Smith credits his success to his father, a renowned chiropractor, who practiced well into the 9th decade of his life. Smith feels his father gave him a head start in life with the early imprint of conscious, compassionate touch.

Zero Balancing primarily addresses “foundation” joints involved in the transmission of energetic forces through the body: the spine, pelvis, hips, and feet, although advanced work includes other joints, the skull, viscera, etc. Foundation joints are evaluated for tissue held tension, range of motion, joint play, quality of motion, and perhaps most importantly, quality of ligament end-feel; it is often through attuned attention to ligament engagement that allows access to the intelligent bioelectric field of the body. When an imbalance is identified, a fulcrum is applied to the area. A fulcrum is a field of tension or point of contact, which when held stationary, becomes a lever upon which the body/mind re-orientes and re-organizes itself via the piezoelectric nature of collagen (discussed below).

When both the energy field and the structural anatomy are contacted simultaneously and consciously, an amazing synthesis occurs, the patient drops into a very relaxed, meditative state. Characteristic feedback signals that occur in the patient: rapid eye movement, eye fluttering, changes in breath pattern, reflex motor activity in hands/feet/face, borborygmus, and more. These working signs

continually inform the practitioner about the effectiveness of the work and the response in the patient. Working signs determine the rate, rhythm, and length of the therapeutic session. In effect, these signs monitor the connection with the patient's body-centered intelligence. Re-evaluation of a joint after fulcrum placement often reveals immediate improvement in function and end-feel. Clinical outcomes include decreased pain, ease of movement, improved range of motion, greater postural awareness, decreased reactivity to physical, mental, and emotional stress, augmented adaptive ability, greater self-awareness, and often a global sense of wholeness and contentment. And the beauty is that both the neuromusculoskeletal and the cognitive benefits occur simultaneously, rather like side-effects of each other. It is one of the most truly holistic ways of addressing a patient that I have come across. The effects of Zero Balancing are likely mediated through the bioelectric field in concert with the mechanical continuum of connective tissue that unifies every part of the body from the outer envelope of skin, through the deepest cell membranes, and into the DNA (Oschman, 2000).

Advances in bioelectrodynamic support the concept of a global body-centered consciousness associated with the anatomy of the aligned, collagen liquid crystalline continuum in the connective tissues which functions as a superconductor. This liquid crystalline collagen network, although interconnected with the systems, exists outside the nervous system, and facilitates communication at a much faster speed than nerve conduction (Ho & Knight, 1998). Dr. Robert O. Becker has studied this bioelectrodynamic field for decades and shows it to be involved in morphogenesis, regeneration, and healing (Becker, 1990). Dr. Valerie Hunt worked in laboratories at UCLA and other universities, and although she started as a scientific skeptic, her life's work concluded with the opinion that the human energy field not only exists, but changes in the field precede physiological responses to physical, mental, and emotional stimuli. She has also shown that changes in the energy field are related to, and precede pathology in the tissues (Hunt, 2000).

Studies in cognitive sciences demonstrate that thoughts and emotions have electrical and thermal properties and, as such, are propagated through wave phenomena within the interconnected superconductive matrix of body tissue. Chiropractors can learn to more consciously access the flow of

information transmitted through connective tissue, including bone, via greater attention to, and perception of tissue-held tension. Osteopathic leaders (Barral, Chaffour, & Upledger) are teaching these skills to a whole new generation of PTs, MTs, and DOs—their classes are packed with practitioners eager to restore vitalism to body-centered therapy. And chiropractors are throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Zero Balancing is a natural and exciting adjunct to chiropractic. The Zero Balancing protocol is an organized, yet organic approach to addressing imbalances in key joints of the skeleton. It can be practiced as a stand-alone manual therapy (sessions last 15-40 minutes), and partial protocols are easily integrated into chiropractic treatment to address problem-focused complaints in shorter patient encounters. Staff therapists can be trained to offer ZB sessions as the doctor continues a higher volume schedule. Although I have hired a trained RN to take on some ZB case load, my fascination with the body-centered consciousness keeps my hands in the work. It is not only an effective therapy for patients, it is like practicing a martial art with the body—practicing the form uncovers endless new learning for practitioners.

Zero Balancing is a valuable asset to me in building a sustainable practice with very minimal advertising or marketing because it is not only clinically effective, *ZB feels really good*. Because of the intentional, mind/body, internally experiential, consciousness-expanding, and stress-reducing nature of the work, patients talk about their sessions with friends and family more so than they might talk about their adjustments. I consistently get feedback like, “After one session the tension just left my shoulders and I felt unusually calm all week. My husband even commented on how happy I seemed. He wants me to keep coming, and I think this would help my son with migraines and anxiety” and “When you worked on my feet, I felt like I came home to myself, like my feet are connecting with the earth better...and my plantar fasciitis disappeared.” For one young man with chronic pain for a year after surgical repair of a fractured ankle, it only took one session to restore the current through the callus at the fracture site and his pain was relieved permanently. Stories like this lead to continuous referrals.

Other chiropractors practicing Zero Balancing agree. Dr. Sean Lynch (Grand Junction, CO) says “ZB has helped with patient retention, in that, even if I don't name it, patients ask for it, sit up

disappointed if I skip using the ZB touch. Many have referred friends and family for Zero Balancing, which has provided an incredible experience to introduce them to chiropractic and all that the adjustment has to offer.” Dr. Seth Rosenblum (Jay, NY) has been using ZB for 10 years. “I have found ZB to be a wonderful adjunct to Chiropractic. It's amazing how powerful even a 10-minute ZB session can be! It has most definitely been a practice builder for me as I have many patients coming specifically for ZB and returning on a regular basis.” Dr. Cheryl Shea (Kirkwood, MO) uses ZB daily in her practice. “Zero Balancing is a powerful but gentle technique. It is effective in achieving both structural and neurological changes in patients.” Dr. Jeff Rockwell, Post-Graduate Faculty at Parker University says, “80% of my adjustments are ZB fulcrums and they are the quintessence of adjusting, as they invite the patient to make the correction from the inside-out.”

Zero Balancing is valuable for patients with intractable low back pain, chronic neck and shoulder tension, radiculopathy, TMJ disorders, migraine and tension headaches, depression and anxiety, unresolved post-surgical pain, knee pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and almost everything that presents in a chiropractic practice. It is an excellent choice for elderly, frail, or frightful patients who may not tolerate HVLA adjustments. Many who present for ZB naturally become chiropractic and nutrition patients as their perception of themselves and their state of health changes from inside out. They tend to take more responsibility for their health and wellness and often self-select ongoing wellness care for which they pay out of pocket.

The chiropractic profession is in dire danger of losing its vitalistic core and becoming back pain mechanics. We can choose to be expert mechanics and we will continue to serve our patients. We can also choose to be expert artisans fine tuning the relationship between the tension on the virtual strings of our patients' tissues and the tone of their music. As we keep an eye on the newer sciences and advancements in the field of energy medicine, we will reclaim the virtuosity of our beloved profession and our patients will arrive on their own. They are waiting for us.

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