

Adriana From Australia Highlights Risks Of Spinal Manipulation

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I came across this website recently as i became more curious about my condition though i was given strict instructions from my GP to never ever look it up on the internet, as you can see i did it anyway.

I had a great life, great family & a perfect job that i would continue to pursue for the rest of my life. Its very rare these days that you come straight out of school & go into the first job that pops up & find that its the job that you will always stick with. I also had lots of friends & family that i spent lots of time with.

I was 20yrs when i started to get the odd occasional stiff back which i had always put down to not be very flexible It wasn't a huge problem but i did seek help from my local GP to see what i could do to help it. I never had any problems playing sport as i grew up & certainly tested it out getting involved in anything my four older brothers were playing & i enjoyed every minute of it. My GPs first thought was to do an X-Ray of the back, as she expected it came up clear showing no abnormalities. She then suggested i see a Physiotherapist for some treatment.

My Physiotherapist (not a Chiropractor) did different types of treatment on me such as heat, massage, a tens machine, that was normal for me but other times he choose to do manipulations. I was only young & trusted my Physiotherapists judgment on what treatment was suitable for me, i never discussed the manipulations with my doctor or family. At no time did the physiotherapist ever explain to me the risks of manipulations.

I continued for the next few years receiving treatment on & off with sometimes not going back for months. It didn't seem a big deal as it was only a stiff back.

It was on the 6th of January 2001 when i was booked in to have treatment again before going to work straight after. I thought it was going to be a day just like any other but it was actually going to be the start of a roller coaster i was just not ready for.

The Physiotherapist started his normal treatment of heat, massage, tens machine & then who knows what way the wind is blowing & if he decides to manipulate my back. Of course he decided to do a manipulation on this day, it was always the same me lying on my side with legs & arms pulled over the side of my body. He began to push to crack the back but this time something was different he didn't get the back to crack the first time so he persisted to push, after six attempts later he finally cracked my back. With the loud crack of my back i felt pain immediatley, by then he had walked out of my room into another with a new patient.

I was still in shock when i finally got up & left his rooms without saying a word, i knew something was wrong but had no idea what he had done to me. I slowly walked down to my work that was in the same street & upon arrival at work my fellow staff members approached me as i entered to see why i looked strange & tender. I left work early that day to hope to find some relief when i got home.

Over the course of the weekend i was a mess & didn't know what to do with myself. By Monday morning i hadn't had any sleep & had only taken tablet after tablet in the hope that it would make my pain disappear. I had never ever felt pain like this before.

My journey started on Monday morning with firstly ringing my Physiotherapist & telling him how i felt, he told to me to come in & see him but this time for some reason he didn't attempt to manipulate me. As i left his practice i was told that he could no longer help me out that i needed to seek medical advice immediatley.

I went to see my GP to see if she could help, she ordered a blood test, x-ray, prescribed anti-inflammatories & pain killers & told me to come back after the results were available. I proceeded back to my doctor 24hrs later to hear the outcome, to my doctors & my shock it showed all clear with no abnormalities at all. She told me to see i felt better & if things got worse to come back immediatley.

The next day i arrived back in a shocking state of pain, she then ordered a CT Scan & said she would now refer me on to a Sports Physician. The CT scan came back that i had a "fractured vertebra" so finally i had an answer to all this pain. I was ordered to continue not working until things were back to normal.

After seeing my Sports Physican's face when he heard about the manipulation he questioned me about why he was even performing them at all, i had no answer. They looked at my CT Scan & decided it wasn't fractured at all but there was some under lying problem that they had no yet picked up. They began there own set of tests ordering another Xray, Blood Test & a Bone Scan, but as time was ticking on they still had no answers & i was still off work.

I had no choice but to go back to work still in a lot of pain & could only hope that it was going to get better soon. My Sports Physician then referred me to another Specialist this time a Rheumatologist.

Now four months had passed & my life was completely different, i was unable to work my usual hours not going out with friends & around the bend in pain 24hrs a day. My Rheumatologist began her diagnosis by performing more tests on me in the hope that she was going to be able to have all my questions answered. Once again i had blood tests, x-rays & put on different medication to see how things went. After she had all her results back she had no answers at all so again i was passed back to my GP.

While all this was going on i was very lucky to have my GP who was always compassionate & caring. My GP then decided that i should give Physio another try but of course this time she referred me to someone else. After another four months passed & a lot of money spent i was given the same story again, "I can't help you anymore you need to see a back specialist".

Over the course of this eight months i was very lucky to have the support of my parents, without them i would have never survived paying all the bills & it was great to have my mum that was by my side for every specialist appointment. At this stage i had now lost all my friends & had no one to talk to, it would have been great if they had stuck beside me at this time when i needed them most of all.

In September i had my appointment with a back specialist. He seemed more positive that he was going to be able to find out the problem & be able to help me, he already had in mind certain treatment. He ordered a MRI & said come back in a couple of weeks to get your results. I was very nervous about the MRI but after the twenty five minutes had passed i was relieved it was all over. To my horror the next day i received a call from the MRI center to say they needed to perform the MRI again. Once again i repeated the MRI this time with them inserting a drip & putting dye through me to get a good picture. At this time i hadn't even thought that this was a bad indication but that the machine hadn't worked & they need to do them over again.

Two weeks later my mum & i returned to find out the results, not knowing that this moment was going to change everything forever. I watched the Specialists face as he read the results, i noticed his face get a strange look & all of a sudden he spits out "You have a Syring in your spinal cord so you must see a neurosurgeon immediatley"! I didn't say anything but looked at my mum for some type of reassurance & then she started to ask him questions such as "What is a syring"? & "Is it serious"? but he only said "I cant answer any of your questions, you are best to get answers from the neurosurgeon i will refer you to". We both walked out of his rooms shocked & very quite not knowing what was actually wrong with me.

I had to wait a few weeks to see the Neurosurgeon Professor & as you can imagine i was not the easiest person to live with over those few critical weeks.

Finally the day arrived to find out what was wrong, i was a wreck & so was my mum though i know she was trying to hide it from me. My Neurosurgeon was really nice & tried to explain it in simple terms. We asked only a few questions & he suggested he re-check the Syring in six months to make sure its not a tumour. If there was going to be one word that was going to freak me out that was it, he did reassure me that its probably only a syring but wanted to make sure one more time. My mum & i left another specialists room wondering why i was to have something as strange as a syring.

I went back to my GP so she could talk to me about what was wrong, if anyone was going to be able to calm me down it was going to be my doctor, she had looked after me since i was 12yrs old. She told me she had never come across one before & that if anyone was going to have something out of the ordinary it was certainly going to be me. She explained it as best she could after she spoke with my neurosurgeon. She then suggested i take a month off work to see if things may settle down as i wasn't coping very well at all with work since it all started.

Of course my work was not happy but had no choice but to accept it as an order from my GP. Over the course of the month i took up swimming & walking in the hope that it my help. After returning back to work in November i realised my back still was the same but always tried to play it down & not say anything in the hope that it would no put my work in jeopardy as id then been there for six years. I continued on always having what was wrong with me hanging over my head & as much as i tried to black it out it would always come back to me.

Over the course of the last nine months the pain never subsided, i was taking anti-inflammatories & too many pain killers just to see the day through. I didn't sleep without sleeping tablets & always woke up feeling sick with the pain.

Finally it was New Years Eve & i was hoping to start a fresh year ahead but at the end of my work day my boss pulled me aside, i thought it was to see how i was doing but i couldn't have been any further from the truth.

He started to get angry with me about how the year had gone & that i wasn't there over the course of that month off to do all my usual work, i apologised but he then just blurted out "i cant have you working here anymore"! I was absolutely devastated as id enjoying working with my staff mates that much that i considered them to be my new friends.

My luck was going from bad to worse rapidly & there was nothing i could do to stop it happening. I had now lost my job, my friends, my social life & felt that i had nothing to live for, only pain.

My GP told me to not rush & not look for work but to take sometime to see how things go with my back. Luckily again i had my parents to support me, they never complained about anything i needed.

I returned six months later to have a MRI & then to see my Neurosurgeon, it was the longest six months of my life.

Luckily enough for me it was only the Syring going from T4-T8 Loculated, he explained that it wasn't a tumour & that it hadn't grown since my last visit, that apparently was good news. I was told that there is the possibility that it may grow but that he would keep an eye on it every six months & told me to come back if things got any worse that he may then decide to operate.

I was now a little bit more clear on what a syring was & knew that this was going to be something that i would have to have checked for the rest of my days & learn to live with.

Over the next few months i did rest, tried another physio, swimming & walking all in an effort to regain my back to its normal state but of course nothing changed.

I looked for new work after having a few months break & luckily enough found a great job with an employer that cares about my back & makes sure im not doing thing that may aggravate it further. Unfortunatley i was only able to go back to six hrs a week as it took me the next

four to five days to recover.

It is now four years later & i am still only able to work six hours a week but am still hopeful that one day i may wake up & these last four years were just a bad nightmare. I take pain killers regularly & am still unable to sleep without the sleeping tablets. I have learned that no body can possibly understand the pain i am constantly feeling or why i seem so distant & unhappy, though i know my mum can see it in my eyes when i am in a lot of pain.

I think the hardest things i've had to change is trying to explain to my nieces & nephews that there aunty isn't the same, though most people say i look great until i pick something up. I still play with them just like i did before as i know they cant fully understand what happened, i know how much pain i will be in after spending time with them but it is certainly worth it to see the smiles on there faces & know that they still enjoy spending time with me.

This is something that i know i will have to deal with & hopefully learn to cope with, but that is going to be a slow process as i still enjoy being young & want my young life back before its too late & its slipped away. It would have to be the loneliest thing i've ever experienced with having to watch my whole family go on with their lives & enjoying everyday they have. I still sit & watch them & hope that one day i will be able to find someone that will accept me with this condition instead of having to lie & hide it from people i've just meet in the hope that they may like me & then i can tell them later.

I am now 27yrs & am trying to still live a normal life, not one that i dreamed of having but one that i must now learn to adapt to. Its at times like this that great parents are definitely what you need by my side & know that they are definitely saints for living with me with this pain & having to put up with me, hoping that i am not ruining there lives.

If anybody gets anything out of this story its that "you should live life for today not for tomorrow"!

--Adriana From Australia

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