

A patient recently began care with me for a chronic shoulder problem. She had developed a frozen shoulder some time ago and has been troubled with the problem ever since. A frozen shoulder is a condition where the ligaments and muscles of the shoulder joint become so damaged that it is nearly impossible to move the shoulder.

I discussed last week how tissue fibrosis in the spine leads to joint and disc degeneration. This is essentially the same for frozen shoulder. Fibrosis results when scar tissue accumulates. Scar tissue is used by the body to form a temporary repair when muscles, tendons, and ligaments are damaged. Ideally the scar tissue will diminish as new normal tissue is created. This doesn't always happen and when it doesn't the function of the associated injured joint is compromised.

This patient has had a significant amount of treatment to her shoulder including physical therapy and two attempts at manipulating the shoulder to break up the scar tissue while she was under anesthesia. All of these treatments provided some benefit, but the condition deteriorated again over time.

When she came to me and described her condition, I knew there was more to this story. I told her that I believed we would find, in addition to her shoulder problem, a chronic problem in her neck, compromising the nerves to the shoulder. Sure enough, the x-rays revealed a significantly degenerated disc at the 5th cervical vertebra.

Over the years I have had countless patients suffering with problems in the arms, shoulders and hands. Nearly all have also had a problem in the neck. If they had previous treatment, typically the treatment was only to the area of pain. The neck problem was usually undiscovered. We were only able to successfully treat the extremity problems for many of these patients, once we included addressing the underlying neck problem.

Nerves regulate the motion of joints, sensation, blood flow and healing. If nerves are compromised, the body may be unable to heal properly. This can lead to accumulated damage to any tissue the nerve supplies. If any of you suffer from chronic problems in the arms or hands that have not responded well to treatment, I encourage you to have your neck evaluated.

To view my previous articles, visit lifetouchclinics.com.