

# M.D. NEWS

**Special Feature**



**Dr. Eben C. Davis, D.C.**

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By Tonya Poole

It's not uncommon in medicine to find physicians practicing specialties that they themselves once experienced as a patient at some point in their lives. The drive to help others overcome what we've been through is, after all, a strong, fundamental and uniquely human virtue.

Dr. Eben Davis of Back and Wrist Pain Consultants says that while being plagued with debilitating migraine headaches, he became a chiropractic patient, before becoming a practitioner. "I had such severe migraines that for awhile I was on disability and taking a lot of medications. But I had good results with natural remedies, and I felt that natural healing made sense. The body creates itself, the body runs itself and it continuously heals itself.

So I chose to focus on those things when I got into practice."

Dr. Davis has 15 years of experience in chiropractic medicine, and has spent each of those years serving clients at his Front Street location in downtown San Francisco. Until recently, Davis says he delivered chiropractic treatments primarily through his hands for manipulation and correction. Complex cases that couldn't be treated through natural means would be referred out for surgery or cortisone injections. But a little more than a year ago, Davis brought on board an innovative spinal decompression machine — the DRX9000™ — and today, much of his practice consists of the patients he once had to turn away.

The machine was created to treat severe low back conditions,

**The staff at Back & Wrist Pain Consultants. We are here to help. Staff, left to right: Angie Pfahnl, B.A., Special Assistant; Victor Martinez, Licensed Personal Trainer; Sarah Palethorpe, Certified Yoga Instructor, Special Assistant, Dr. Eben Davis, D.C., Clinic Director; Daniel Derrick, Certified Massage Therapist; and Vanessa Ray, M.A., Special Assistant.**





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**Nonsurgical spinal decompression is applied to the cervical spine.**

like herniated and badly degenerated discs, sciatica and spinal arthritis — the first treatment in the United States able to enlarge, reposition and heal discs in the lower back. “I had originally read about it in an orthopaedic journal,” he says. “It caught my attention, and some of my colleagues were telling me how great it was. But I already had a thriving practice and wanted to make sure it would be a good fit here, so I contacted the manufacturer and flew out to visit them. I took a seminar, and I flew to clinics where it was already in use so I could observe it in action. I talked to patients. I spent about a year researching the machine.”

The extra homework paid off. Despite his skepticism early on, Davis says the patient outcomes were fantastic and the science behind the treatment was solid. But it was important to him and his team that the DRX9000™ not stand alone as the magic wand against lower back problems. Holistic health, lifestyle and habits play a large part in a wide range of back pain trouble, and he strongly believes in contextual (lifestyle) therapies as a critical part of the process.

“We encourage patients to explore where the problem came from in the first place,” says Davis. “The spine doesn’t tend to degenerate on its own; it needs external circumstances, lifestyle circumstances. The foods we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, pollutants, lack of exercise or consequently, relaxation,

even electromagnetic fields from our appliances can contribute, as well as the cumulative physical traumas most of us associate with back pain. Being out of balance for most of our lives leads directly to problems like those I see every day.”

Davis says each of these areas of our lives has what he calls an adjustable knob that belongs to it, and his treatments are aimed at teaching patients how to adjust those knobs in the direction of health, creating fertile ground for healing to take place.

The combined treatment has seen success across the board at his practice, though Davis is careful to note that when you’re treating such a large and varied population, results are defined very differently from patient to patient. “For a 90-year-old, success might be to have her up and walking around the house without a cane, traveling comfortably to visit grandkids. For a 26-year-old, success might be getting them back up on the surfboard. I’ve seen both scenarios happen here.”

For the most part, DRX9000™ candidates have tried other conventional methods first, with little to no success, and come to Davis before resorting to surgery — a tricky business when you’re dealing with the spine, and one that only sees an average of 10-15 percent net success. A safer, more effective alternative, the DRX9000™ has seen success rates of about 86 percent in the industry overall, and Davis says they’ve achieved about 90 percent



**Vanessa Ray, M.A., initiates lumbar decompression therapy on the DRX9000.™**

in his practice, thanks to the holistic approach, and the extensive rehabilitation process he adds to the treatment protocol.

The program is divided into two six-week phases: the DRX9000™ and home care treatment, and the after-treatment SpineForce program. During the first phase, the DRX treatment works to apply a negative pressure to the patient's lower back to enlarge disc space. Treatments typically last about 30-45 minutes, and patients report feeling only a slight, gradual pull in the spine. For some, in fact, the treatment is so relaxing that Davis says he often has to wake patients up when they're finished. "I tell them to bring CDs, even DVDs," he says. "It's got a DVD player built right in."

After spinal decompression, patients receive 10 minutes each of muscle stimulation to aid in consolidation and reactivation of muscles, and ice to reduce any inflammation and calm muscle spasms. Patients are then coached on what they can do at home to

continue to improve their results, including the implementation of a comprehensive program that includes diet, yoga, relaxation therapies and breathing exercises. For some, relief comes immediately, often after they step off of the machine for the first time. Others report marked improvements farther along in the treatment process, but Davis says the average patient feels relief within about three weeks.

Phase II of the program is a rehabilitation series designed to facilitate neuromuscular re-education through the use of the SpineForce™ machine and accompanying therapies in 40-minute sessions, twice each week. Also a six-week program, the 40-minute sessions include 20 minutes on SpineForce™ and another 20 minutes on high-tech aqua beds that combine whirlpool, massage and heat. "I believe we have the only aqua beds in the San Francisco Bay Area," says Davis.

To help core strengthening and the re-training of back muscles to hold and support the spine in its new place, the SpineForce™ machine uses an oscillating platform, ergonomic handles and an interactive display that lets patients know when and where to move and apply pressure. Programs are designed individually around each patient's unique needs. Together with the DRX9000™ machine, Davis says they're able to deliver powerful results.

"This is a three-month program, so it's not a magic bullet," he says. "But there just isn't anything out there today delivering

better outcomes, especially for patients who've been unable to find successful treatment elsewhere. Most of my patients are people I wasn't able to touch before, it was just too painful for them. But once they've gone through the DRX and rehab treatment, then we're able to successfully continue on down the road with more traditional manipulations as a maintenance effort."

Davis says about 50 percent of his patients opt to come back in for recurring treatments, usually four to six times a year, and stresses the importance of lifestyle changes at home to complement and continue the clinical parts of the program. "We help to adjust those 'knobs' in the right direction," he says. "But habits and choices are a large part of carrying that out through the long term. Our average patient actually loses 10-15 pounds during their 12 weeks on the program thanks to many of those lifestyle adjustments. It's about making good choices."



The SpineForce™ is able to create a safe, but unstable enough environment necessary to activate the deep, hard to reach CORE spinal muscles, rehabilitating and reconditioning them, so that they can support the spine in its new and healthier condition. Elderly patients are especially grateful, as most find it extremely difficult to engage in CORE strengthening exercises using other methods. With the SpineForce™ there is a starting point for everyone. Your personal trainer is with you every step of the way.



**Dr. Davis screens MRI films for disc degeneration and bulging or herniated discs to determine if this patient is a candidate for decompression disc therapy.**

**AQUABED DRY HYDROTHERAPY** is a combination of heat, whirlpool and massage. The Aquabeds are used in conjunction with the SpineForce during the rehabilitation stage to help relax muscles and improve circulation.



PHOTOS BY BRUCE SCHNEIDER-SCHNEIDER/SWINKS PHOTOGRAPHY

Davis now has two DRX9000™ machines in his office, plus a cervical machine for treating disc herniations in the neck. He is currently waiting for a third and hopes to have a fourth by the end of the year. The demand has been both overwhelming and rewarding, and Davis, his team and his patients couldn't be more delighted with the results.

"This is very satisfying work," he says. "I come in here every day, and I help people that haven't been able to find relief anywhere else. And then they leave here, and they're just so incredibly grateful. It's changed the whole practice." ■

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