

# Better Is Still an Option

Category: Making Assumptions

written by Andrea Gordon | August 6, 2019

Ella was a surprise sent to me by a geriatrician for osteopathic manipulation (OMT). With knees and back stiffened by osteoarthritis, Ella had found that chiropractic care and her walker kept her mobile enough to get out to family events and church activities. Now she could no longer afford chiropractic care, but visits with me—her family physician—would be covered.

At our first visit I was delighted by her verve and humor, as she told me she was going to “keep moving until I die.” Under her health plan, I couldn’t see her very often, but she said that she felt better after each treatment, feeling less pain and more flexibility. She even used a gentle neck release on a friend from church who had pain after a bus trip, proudly noting that she knew just what to do since I had done it on her so often. Our visits always left me feeling a little more optimistic, both about medicine and about getting older.

After four or five visits, I asked if she wanted to continue. In my mind we were working on controlling her pain and stiffness, but I worried that visits spaced so far apart weren’t keeping her comfortable enough. But Ella surprised me once again and said, “I’m getting better, so I want to keep coming!” “Oh, right, better,” I thought, ashamed that I had written off her potential to improve. She continued, trying to convince me that our efforts were worth it. “My grandson didn’t know that I can lay flat now and don’t have to sleep in my chair. But I showed him!” she boasted. “And I’m planning that car trip to Tennessee, even if I have to stop every hour to stretch.”

As we reassured each other that our time together was well-spent, I reminded myself not to assume that healing has an expiration date.

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