

# Just a Little Twist

Category: My Aching Back

written by Jenni Levy | December 2, 2019

The ache was in a familiar spot: in my mid thorax, starting over my spine and spreading a little to each side. It showed up a few times a year, always in the same place. It wasn't terrible. I went to work, shopped for groceries, walked the dog, kept living my life. Maybe I woke up more often at night. Okay, maybe I woke up every hour and maybe sometimes I had trouble getting back to sleep. And maybe I had to cut back on the ibuprofen because it added epigastric pain to my back pain. But it wasn't *bad*. I certainly wasn't going to see a doctor. For one thing, I *am* a doctor, and I know back pain is self-limiting. For another, I'm a fat doctor, and the last thing I needed was a lecture from a well-meaning colleague about my weight. So I put up with the backache.

Until the day one of my partners noticed me trying unsuccessfully to stretch during a too-long meeting. Afterward he said, "Back?" I nodded. He asked, "Want me to try some OMT?" I knew he was a DO, a doctor of osteopathy, and that he was offering me osteopathic manipulative treatment. I'm an MD. In New York and California, where I did my training in the 1980s, I didn't meet any DOs. But here in Pennsylvania, I work with a number of DOs. They generally minimize the differences between us, and we MDs know they're just as skilled as we are. I did know that my DO colleagues had funny-looking tables in their exam rooms but had never seen one of them used. I wasn't sure OMT was worthwhile, but my back hurt and my next patient wasn't in the room yet – so what the heck.

I lay down on the table, and my colleague gathered me gently into his arms. He twisted my back just a little bit. I have no idea what he actually did. The next thing I knew, I felt a tiny "pop" and a shift in my spine, and my pain went away. It was completely gone. And it stayed gone.

That little twist changed my own health care and my practice. I chose a DO who does OMT as my PCP. I refer my patients to DOs for manipulation. And some days I wish I'd gone to a medical school where I learned to do something tangible for patients with pain.

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