

## **NATUROPATHIC CONSTITUTIONAL HYDROTHERAPY**

### **RICH IN HISTORY**

Stemming from modern hydrotherapy treatments that originated in Europe, the constitutional hydrotherapy treatment was developed and perfected by a naturopathic physician, Dr. O.G. Carroll (1879-1962). Dr. Carroll was the “the busiest health practitioner of any persuasion in the United States in the 1930’s and 1940’s” and his practice centered around this treatment that he had perfected by 1923 and which did not change for the next 40 years. Fortunately, the practice and principles of constitutional hydrotherapy have been preserved for this current generation of naturopathic physicians through the subsequent work of Drs. John Bastyr, Harold Dick, Leo Scott and Bill Carroll.

### **GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE TREATMENT**

One of the principles of naturopathic constitutional hydrotherapy is that health (and healing) is proportional to the normal flow of healthy blood, specifically referring to both the quantity and the quality of blood flowing through a given tissue. The treatment goal is to *normalize the quantity of blood circulating through a given area or tissue* during a given period of time, as well as to *improve the overall quality of blood in the general circulation*.

Medicine has long recognized the mechanical effects of water temperature on blood flow (e.g. that hot water will relax a tight muscle or that cold, as in the form of an ice pack, can limit swelling and inflammation in a tissue area). Naturopathic constitutional hydrotherapy further expounds upon these principles, and while utilizing these basic mechanical effects to influence the quantity of blood flowing through a given tissue, also seeks to improve the quality of the blood circulating. This is accomplished in the treatment by enhancing blood flow through the organs of elimination (skin, liver, lungs, kidneys, colon) and subsequently deriving improved blood quality through the increased elimination of metabolic waste products. Concomitant treatment, aimed at tonifying the organs of digestion and improving the process of digestion and absorption of nutrients into the blood, help to build up desirable blood elements such as oxygen, nutrients, optimize blood and immune cell populations, etc., further improving overall blood quality.

Viewing the blood as the vehicle conveying life to all cells (oxygen, nutrients, etc.), naturopathic constitutional hydrotherapy manipulates the circulation in order to maximize the benefits of this process for overall health and healing. It enhances the immune response, improves overall nutrition, promotes detoxification and helps restore nervous equilibrium. Naturopathic constitutional hydrotherapy works because it helps to optimize the quality of blood, while improving the efficiency of its circulation.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE TREATMENT PROCEDURE**

Constitutional hydrotherapy is a fairly complex treatment and the treatment mechanics can only be mastered through repeated, supervised practice. Six important treatment variables that the naturopathic physician manipulates, within the context of the application applied to the body, in order to accomplish the treatment goal include **temperature, timing (duration, frequency, hour of the day), location, pressure or friction, material used to cover the compress, and wetness.**

The ability to adjust these treatment variables appropriately to individual patient, in order to best accomplish the treatment goal, is the art of the treatment application.

*The basic procedure is a series of hot and cold compresses applied to the chest, abdomen and back in conjunction with mild sine wave or other mild electrical stimulation to the back and abdomen. The procedure takes approximately one hour, depending upon the individual being treated. A treatment protocol generally consists of a series of individual treatments, specifically designed for that individual, that are adjusted as necessary, as their healing progresses.*

## **INDICATIONS**

Because of its ability to improve the overall nutrition of the individual and boost the immunity, constitutional hydrotherapy may be useful in almost any condition. However, it has been found to be particularly suited to digestive tract problems (dyspepsia, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis), respiratory problems (chronic asthma, bronchitis, pleurisy), infectious disease (colds, flu, lymphangitis), female reproductive problems (PMS, dysmenorrhea, infertility), immune deficiency problems (environmental hypersensitivity), circulatory problems (varicose veins, hemorrhoids, Raynaud's disease, mild hypertension) and other ailments such as arthritis, diabetes, depression, obesity and psoriasis.

## **CONTRAINDICATIONS**

Serious illness or extremely low vitality (elderly, very young children), high fever, low oral temperature (< 97 F), acute bladder infection, acute asthma, cardiac disease, moderate or malignant hypertension, heat-insensitive skin (as in neuropathy, etc.), Raynaud's syndrome as part of an autoimmune complex such as lupus, fear of treatment. Also, metal implants and pacemakers, IUDs, metal piercings, open wounds, active bleeding including menstruation, pregnancy, blood clot, malignancy or metastatic cancer, hematoma or fracture near sine wave application sites.

## **PATIENT PREPARATION**

Patient preparation for the treatment requires removal of metal jewelry and piercings, especially near the site of sine wave application. Ideally, in the 24 hours prior to the treatment, the patient has had three square meals (balanced in protein, carbohydrate and fat), a vitamin shake, and adequate water. The patient should not consume a large meal or high-sugar or refined carbohydrate bolus immediately prior to the treatment.