

# **Craniosacral Therapy**

## **Background**

Craniosacral therapy is a form of therapeutic touch based on “listening with the hands to the innate motions and rhythms of the body”. Through acknowledgement of the inter-connections of the mind, body and spirit and retention of memories, particularly memories of trauma, craniosacral therapy is said to create optimal conditions for health by facilitating a sense of well being. William Sutherland, D.O. founded craniosacral therapy in the 1940s.

## **Theory and Philosophy**

Craniosacral therapy is said to concentrate on the harmonization of pulsating motions of the cerebrospinal fluid. The cranium, spinal column, sacrum, meningeal membranes, cerebrospinal fluid and structures that produce the cerebrospinal fluid constitute the craniosacral system. The craniosacral therapist applies minute mechanical force to manipulate the skull and the sacrum, in order to “move fluid forces” deep within the body. The therapeutic goal is to facilitate change in areas of restriction. Craniosacral therapy is supplemented by somatoemotional processing and therapeutic dialogue intended to release memories of injuries and traumatic events. The craniosacral therapist uses instinct rather than reason when treating disease and illness. In order for the therapy to be successful, the patient must trust the therapist and must have faith in the process. The therapy is so gentle that it has been recommended for babies, children, elderly and frail adults.

## **Diagnostic methods**

During therapy, the client is usually supine on a table, but may be seated. The therapist will assess the patterns of energy in the body through touch at several “listening stations”.

## **Scope of Practice**

Craniosacral techniques are used by osteopaths, naturopaths, massage therapists and craniosacral therapists to treat many common conditions. Typical therapeutic sessions last 40-60 minutes and consist of light touch with little to no actual manipulation of the head or neck.

Relief from a condition may be felt immediately or 24-48 hours later. Typically an individual will undergo 6-12 therapeutic sessions, 5-7 days apart. Cost is on the order of \$65-\$170 per session. A very wide range of conditions are commonly treated including colic, arthritis, back pain, TMJ pain, chronic fatigue, autism, headaches.

## **Scientific Basis**

There are no craniosacral clinical trials found by searching MEDLINE for craniosacral and clinical trials. Diagnostic findings correlate poorly between examiners. (Hanten, 1998; Moran, 2001)

## **Training and Licensure Requirements**

Registered craniosacral therapists have one year of training beyond a post-graduate level. Registered therapists are usually qualified as an osteopath and have had training in basic anatomy and physiology. Osteopaths, naturopaths and massage therapists usually use craniosacral techniques with a generally directive and analytical approach, whereas a licensed craniosacral therapist is more apt to function out of a psychotherapeutic modality.

## **References**

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Hanten WP, Dawson DD, Iwata M, Seiden M, Whitten FG, Zink T. Craniosacral rhythm: reliability and relationships with cardiac and respiratory rates. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther* 1998 Mar;27(3):213-8.

Moran RW, Gibbons P. Intraexaminer and interexaminer reliability for palpation of the cranial rhythmic impulse at the head and sacrum. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* 2001 Mar-Apr;24(3):183-90.