

Massage Today Reader Discovers "Anything is Possible"

By John Upledger, DO, OMM

Terri, a normally healthy 62-year-old woman, was recently scouring the Internet for help when she ran across a *Massage Today* article that she said "literally saved my life." She was suffering from severe **anemia** that doctors at two different hospitals couldn't explain.

Her health had started degrading a year earlier when she found herself dramatically short of breath. "I couldn't get dressed in the morning without having to sit down and rest," Terri said. "I couldn't even walk to the bathroom from my desk at the office."

Doctors suspected Terri had a rare form of asthma, but that didn't sit right with her. "I wasn't wheezing at all. I just had shortness of breath." Nonetheless, they put her on a steroid for six months to try to clear it up. "It didn't do anything except make me gain a lot of weight," she said.

Then last November, Terri's right foot and big toe went numb and turned blue. She immediately checked into the hospital, but this time she was told she probably had peripheral artery disease. The surgeons began preparing for an angioplasty. "In the process, they asked me to sign a release that gave them permission to amputate my foot!" she exclaimed. Fortunately for Terri, her intuition told her that something wasn't quite right with this picture. So against doctor's orders and pleas from her daughters, she signed herself out of the hospital and found her way to a different doctor, one she hoped would finally listen to her.

After a battery of tests ruled out plaque around the heart, doctors gave Terri a new diagnosis. "Your big toe is broken," they said. "What's wrong with that?" she asked. As it turned out, plenty. She was also suffering from something the other doctors hadn't mentioned: severe anemia.

Anemia

Anemia occurs when you don't have enough healthy red blood cells, or when **the red blood cells don't have enough hemoglobin to transport oxygen to the organs**. For men, a count of less than 14g per deciliter is worrisome. In women, anything less than 12g is a problem.

By the time Terri went back to the hospital five days later, her hemoglobin was at an 8. But she still wasn't prepared for what her doctors recommended next: a blood transfusion. "I was shocked. I had no idea it was that bad," she said. "But it was all too much. I told them I had to go home and think about it."

Unfortunately, within a of couple days, her hemoglobin had dropped to the dangerous level of 6 and she collapsed.

Back at the hospital, Terri received four consecutive blood transfusions. "They say one every few months is the norm. But that's what it took to get my

hemoglobin level back up to an 8," Terri said. Assuming she must have been bleeding internally, the doctors ordered another round of tests. Everything came up negative.

By January Terri's hemoglobin was back down to a 7, but the doctors still didn't know what was wrong. So they gave her another transfusion. Finally, they told her it was just too dangerous to continue doing that. They were going to wait until it got down to a 6 before giving her any more.

"I was playing with my life," Terri said. "I thought, at this rate, I might just not wake up one day." Her doctors agreed and actually advised her to get her affairs in order. "They still didn't know what was causing it. They even suggested chemotherapy just in case it was a cancer they couldn't find."

Light-Touch Therapy

When Terri went home that day, she decided to take her health care into her own hands. She started by searching for clues on the Internet. The last time she had looked, she was reviewing the prosthetics she thought she'd need after her foot was amputated. But this time she was determined to "sit there for 24 hours if that was what it took to find some kind of treatment for anemia."

She began Googling. That's when she found a *Massage Today* article called "**Unwinding Meridians to Reverse Anemia**" by Dr. Kenneth Koles (April 2009 issue). In it, Koles talks about combining acupuncture with CranioSacral Therapy to treat a woman named Helen who was suffering from anemia like Terri was.

CranioSacral Therapy rang a bell with Terri. "I have a friend who's a massage therapist and she was trained in cranial work, too," she said. So she quickly called Laura Gomez, Ms.T. Coincidentally, Laura had just read the same article, and she immediately drove to Terri's for her first treatment.

"It didn't feel like any massage I'd ever had," Terri said. "It felt more like acupressure to me. It was strange, I remember hearing in my right ear the sound of blood flowing. It sounded like the ocean." Laura continued to work on her for two hours, coming back several times in seven days.

Terri went to her doctor to have her blood checked once again. "I was so depressed. If this didn't work, I didn't know what I was going to do." To her surprise, her hemoglobin count actually went up two-tenths of a point. "That doesn't sound like a lot, but normally I'd go down five-tenths every week. So to me, that was more like seven-tenths of an increase!"

Hopeful for the first time in months, Terri had two more CranioSacral sessions the following week. Her next blood test was even more promising. She was up to a 9.3. "It went up six-tenths of a point! And my iron levels went up one whole gram, and I wasn't eating spinach or anything. I had just started taking iron pills, but the doctor told me they wouldn't have started working for months."

"My doctor said it's a miracle," Terri said. And when she told him about CranioSacral Therapy, he commented, "I suppose anything's possible." Fortunately for Terri, with the help of hands-on therapy, he's right.