

A Case Report of
**Musculoskeletal Pain
and PTSD**
Interprofessional Education

R.F.

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**“You control pain, pain does not control you.”
A Case Report of Chronic Pain**

Presenting Condition: “Chronic pain and PTSD have formed an inter-connected relationship”

R.F. is a 57 y/o male husband, father, and Navy SEAL retiree who currently experiences chronic musculoskeletal pain, as well as PTSD, due to 32 years of service in the Navy. He explains that his extreme training, particularly to be a Navy SEAL, has been a main contributor to his pain — “At weeks end I had lost 30 pounds, six toe nails and a knee that was the size of a melon.” He has had multiple injuries and surgeries throughout the course of his career, and believes that his chronic pain and PTSD are related. He was trained to deal with pain with the mind – “Mind over pain” – and explains that pain was not in his vocabulary. In addition to his injuries, he was exposed to high levels of radiofrequency radiation as well as several traumatic events during his service. Although variable, his pain can become so debilitating that it prohibits him from exiting his vehicle without assistance. R.F. does not take any medications to treat his pain. Equine therapy has proven to be the best method of alleviating both his PTSD and chronic pain symptoms.

Patient Profile:

Age: 57

Height: 6’1”

Weight: 215

Language(s): English, German

Condition(s): various chronic musculoskeletal complaints; low back pain from five herniated discs

Past Medical History:

Past Illnesses: none

Injuries: lumbar compression fracture, 5 herniated discs, bilateral torn Achilles tendon, ruptured tympanic membrane

Immunizations: up to date

Medications:

- Prescribed: citrulline (PTSD) 50mg twice daily; alprazolam 50 mg for sleep
- Over the counter: Niacin daily

Allergies: keflex-reaction: unknown

Surgical History: 1971 appendectomy
1974 bilateral hernia repair
1977 bilateral hernia repair
1992 right hernia repair
1994 right Achilles tendon repair
1998 left Achilles tendon repair
2000 left hernia repair

2001 lysis of adhesions

Hospitalizations: ruptured appendix
1976 inpatient psychiatric evaluation due to physical and mental trauma in the Navy

Personal Health Influencing Behaviors:

Diet: no specific diet modification

Caffeine Use: none

Alcohol Use: none

Nicotine Use: none

Illicit Drug Use: none

Exercise: four times a week: weight training; biking; swimming

Sleep Patterns: tries to sleep on back; usually in pain during sleep; delayed onset of sleep but use of benzodiazepine helps; nightmares of Navy service

Family Medical History: no relevant family history

Social History and Lifestyle: R.F. has two daughters, and lives with his wife and one of their children. He was a high-end consultant for a consolidation and remodeling business. R.F. currently volunteers at a horse farm for equine therapy.

Glossary of Terms

1. **Alprazolam:** a benzodiazepine used to treat anxiety disorders, panic disorders, and anxiety caused by depression.
2. **Appendectomy:** the surgical removal of the appendix. It is normally performed when a patient is suffering from appendicitis (inflammation of the appendix) characterized by pain, tenderness, vomiting and fever.
3. **Equine Therapy:** a form of experimental therapy that involves interactions between patients and horses.
4. **Hernia:** the protrusion of an organ—or the fascia of an organ—through the wall of the same cavity that would normally keep it contained.
5. **Herniated Disc:** occurs when all or part of a disc's nucleus (inner gel-like substance) pushes through the annulus (outer ring of cartilage of the disc), toward the spinal canal. This puts pressure on the nerves often producing pain, numbness, or weakness.
6. **Keflex:** a cephalosporin antibiotic (derived from a fungus). Keflex is used to treat bacterial infections, including infections of the ears, skin, upper respiratory tract, and urinary tract infections.
7. **Lumbar Compression Fractures:** occur in the setting of either severe trauma, or pathologic weakening of the bone. These fractures either increase or decrease the lumbar curve, altering posture, and causing significant pain.
8. **Lumbar Spine:** the five largest and strongest vertebrae that comprise the lower back. The *Lumbar Spine* provides stability and support, allowing humans to walk upright.
9. **Lysis of Adhesions:** the process of cutting scar tissue within the body to restore normal functioning, and reduce pain.
10. **Niacin:** a B3 vitamin used to lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood. It also reduces heart attack risk and narrowing of the arteries in people who have heart disease.
11. **Ruptured Tympanic Membrane (Ruptured Eardrum):** a hole or tear in the thin tissue that separates the ear canal from the middle ear.