



Craniosacral Therapy: Practitioners claim it is effective, skeptics claim there is little scientific evidence to confirm its effectiveness. Regardless of who you believe, craniosacral therapy (CST) is one of the more controversial therapeutic techniques.

¹A derivative of cranial osteopathy, CST originated from the cranial manipulation studies of Dr. William Sutherland in the 1930's, and evolved into its present form mostly through the work of Dr. John Upledger beginning in the 1970's. Today there are more than 52,000 practitioners trained through Dr. Upledger's programs. In lay terminology, ^{2,3}the underlying theory behind CST is that by gently working with the spine, the skull and its cranial sutures, diaphragms, and fascia; the restrictions of nerve passages can be eased, and movement of cerebrospinal fluid can be optimized - similar to myofascial release except the release is to ease restrictions along the dural membranes. The controversy is over the absence of unbiased studies, and the differing pathology over if, why, and how CST works. In this writer's opinion it is a little like the question "what is art?" Proponents site individual successes, critics often take phrases in published writings out of context, and are themselves guilty of many of the same prejudices of the people they are critiquing. ⁴However, most everyone agrees that research methods that could conclusively evaluate effectiveness (of CST) have not been applied. ⁵One of the few accepted studies that should be of interest to our senior population stated that the use of CST to manage pain, facilitate rehabilitation, and reduce agitation, and hypertension, among others, appear promising and should be further investigated. The study did not establish effectiveness of CST for any specific medical condition, but "does suggest that the therapy may provide substantial benefits to older adults." Our own therapists frequently incorporate CST techniques when treating chronic headaches, neck, and back pain. ⁶Perhaps the most intriguing future for CST lies with its application to a much younger patient population, as an increasing number of CST trained therapists report improvements in attention span, sleep patterns, and cognitive functioning in children with developmental disabilities (such as autism), when CST is added to their therapy protocols. Unfortunately, CST by itself, is not covered by most insurance programs, however when blended with other myofascial techniques, it becomes part of a covered service. Our staff includes CST trained therapists and an Upledger instructor, and we have added CST to our referral forms in such a way that it will be covered by Medicare and most insurance.

1. CranioSacral Therapy, Upledger Institute Web site, accessed Nov 22, 2007

2. Upledger J, *Craniosacral Therapy and Somato Emotional Release*, 2nd edit, North Atlantic Books, 1997

3. Wirth-Pattullo V, Hayes KW, Interrater reliability of craniosacral rate measurements; *Physical Therapy* 74:908-16,1994

4. Green CJ et al: Systematic Review of Craniosacral Therapy; *Comp. Therapies in Medicine*, 1999: 7 (4):201-7

5. Walsh EG, Geriatric Applications of Craniosacral Therapy; *Int Jour of Healing and Caring*, 2007, Vol 7, No.1

6. Mastello TL, Pace J, Influences of CST on the Health and Development of Infants and Young Children;

Please consider asking your doctor for a referral to our practice if you are bothered by pain, suffer from an injury, or are planning a surgery. You can print a referral form (Rx form) from the home page of this website.