



Fitness

Chiropractical magic

TO MANY PEOPLE THE HUMAN BACK IS A MYSTERY, but it is also the origin of many aches and pains which can be easily fixed with a bit of expert knowledge

BACK problems are one of the most common reasons that people seek advice from their doctors and, judging by the numbers of letters we receive, it would seem that bike riders are particularly prone to developing niggling pains or more serious problems.

With the population as a whole, more days of work are lost due to lower back pain than any other form of illness. Never mind work, how many days' cycling are being lost? *Cycling Weekly's* own editor Robert Garbutt involuntarily retired from cycling due to back and neck problems, but with the help of chiropractor Dr Michael Lanning he's back on his bike.

When you visit your GP with back problems there is a set pathway of treatment. At present this does not include chiropractic care, which is considered 'alternative' medicine. But those with back problems are increasingly by-passing the usual route and going to a chiropractor.



Chiropractic care: can work wonders quickly and simply

GOING STRAIGHT

Back problems occur for a variety of reasons; they can be the result of a trauma such as a car or bike crash, or can develop over time due to postural or muscular imbalances. This is possibly one of the key reasons that cyclists are prime targets for back, muscular or skeletal problems — bike riding fixes the body in a specific position. For several hours you ride your bike with your limbs in a set positions, hands on bars, head down, back and

shoulders rolled forward. If your bike isn't perfectly set up, the immobility of the position you ride in can aggravate any underlying injury, or cause a new one.

Chiropractic care begins with a process of analysis to establish where the problem is and identify the cause. Then a series of manipulations are applied to the spine to bring the body back into alignment. It's rather like a mechanic tweaking a few spokes when truing a wheel. As a wheel that is in true

runs more efficiently, so adjustments can make your body perform better.

Cyclists have a 'pain is good' philosophy. Our sport is a tough one and we learn to tolerate a high degree of discomfort. Maybe this is why cyclists don't always seek professional help for injuries or discomfort.

Leaving a problem too long can worsen it, but appropriate care can get you back on your bike quickly and performing as well as you did before.

▶ NEXT WEEK:

We take an in-depth look at haematocrit: what it is; how it plays a role in cycling; and how CW's own guinea pigs fared when they had their levels taken