

A CHIROPRACTOR WITH A DIFFERENCE: NIGEL PEEK

When you meet the right doctor, massage therapist or even yoga teacher the feeling you get upon first spending time with them is that they “get” you, and a warm feeling of trust rolls over you immediately. You know that your gut is telling you that you’re in good hands, and that your fears, conditions or emotional concerns are safe with them.

I have suffered from a severely problematic back from a very early age, which I’d learnt to “live” with unless a particularly bad bout of pain hit and I ended up in bed. When this happened a couple of months back Nikki Ralston from Ponsonby’s Urban Ashram (the “right” massage therapist and yoga teacher for me) recommended Nigel Peek of Peek Practice immediately as the best man for the job. She emphasised his multidisciplinary, integrated approach to spine and neuromusculoskeletal disorder treatment and I was intrigued - and not long after up on my feet again and feeling all the better for having made a connection with him.

Born in Zimbabwe, Nigel has been in New Zealand for eight years, drawn here by genealogy - his grandfather was a Kiwi who fought with the ANZACs - and the fact that things in his home country were becoming more and more precarious every day. “The political atmosphere was incredibly unstable, and my mum had New Zealand citizenship so had decided to move here,” he says, and soon after he decided to follow when the thought of further turmoil became closer to a reality. After he graduated from Durban University of Technology in 2005 (completing a six year Masters Degree in Chiropractic), Nigel immigrated to New Zealand and passed the New Zealand Chiropractic Board exam. In 2009 he completed a postgraduate certificate in Medical/Western Acupuncture at AUT in Auckland and further developed his unique approach to what can be a very traditional way of working with the spine.

The first practice he worked in was in Newton, followed by a lengthy stint at another Ponsonby clinic. In August of this year he decided to go out on his own, and Peek Practice was born when he first laid eyes on the spacious, light and airy premises he now works from on Brown Street. “I took one look at it and thought ‘this is amazing’,” he says with a smile, “and as a shell it was so perfect for what I needed.” He admits to falling in love with the greater Ponsonby area from the moment he arrived in New Zealand, “and the plan was always to stay and work here, I couldn’t imagine being anywhere else.”

His clients come to him for the service he provides, but also for the unique approach he takes to chiropractic work all round. Acupuncture plays a key role in his work, as well as a thorough delving into each client’s general health and wellbeing - including their diet. “I try to get a feel for a new client’s big picture stuff,” he explains, “because the spine and the brain are closely linked, the spine is the primary lifeline to your body. I treat a lot of people under both psychological and physical stress, and look at every element that could be contributing to that and the resulting pain.”

He emphasises the fact that “the spine is an intricate, complex structure. So when things go wrong a unique, skilled set of expertise is mandatory to diagnose the many and varied conditions that result. Whilst pain is often the presenting complaint, there are a myriad of other symptoms that may accompany it.” More complex disorders of the nervous system such as migraine, irritable bowel syndrome and balance disorders are often interlaced in the presentation of back pain, an area that fascinates and challenges him. “I’m particularly interested in conditions like migraines,” he says, “because the problem is just so much more than a headache. When someone comes to me with back pain I like to look at why they have a predisposition for pain to start with, and not just back pain. We all express pain so differently.”

“I try not to take a mechanical approach off the cuff,” he says with a smile, “I want to make sure that when I deliver treatment it is comfortable for the patient and I’m not just cracking backs. Reassuring someone and asking the right questions can play an equally big role in the treatment process, when people understand their problems they have real power over them.” (HELENE RAVLICH) **PN**

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