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1917: Mechanical treatment of spine curvature

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The article was accompanied by lantern slides of one of his patients, a 13-year-old boy. [Figures 2 and 3] Dr. Peckham described the “mechanical” treatment of correcting the condition and noted that “if a child with a spinal curvature was laid face down over a convex surface, the spine became immediately lengthened and the deformity quite markedly diminished just by the position alone. If to this is added rotating pulls, as in Figure 2, the spine may be made straight temporarily…”

With the body in different degrees of flexion, rotary pulls were made to obtain as much correction as possible while keeping the patient comfortable.

Figure 3 A shows the spine with patient standing, B shows the spine after 5 minutes in arranging the patient as shown in Figure 2, C shows the spine in January, while D shows the spine three months later.

Dr. Peckham reported the steady progress of the patient over a six-month period, with a follow-up recommendation that gymnastic exercises be initiated until the “musculature will hold the body and head in the erect position.”

Figure 2. Showing patient in position, face down over a convex frame.
Rotary pulls are also in evidence.

Figure 3.
Other apparatus to treat spinal conditions

Use of the Sayre head sling for the correction of scoliosis.


A patient stretched on a frame to treat rheumatoid spondylitis.