

PHOTO BY TIM JEAN

Chiropractor Chris Condon treats Mahendra Shah, an Indian man who comes to Andover each year from Bombay, to have back treatments. Several doctors recommended that Shah undergo surgery, but he looked for another option and found it at Condon's Andover Spine Center, says Shah.

## Long-distance healing

Indian man with spinal issues comes to Andover chiropractor for back treatments

By Brian Messenger

A second opinion can be invaluable when treating personal health issues.

But for Mahendra Shah, it took more than a dozen of them – and a trip across the globe – before his effort finally paid off.

Shah, an Indian citizen whose degenerative spine condition kept him bedridden for months, said he searched both his own country and the eastern United States for an alternative to risky surgery before finding solace at the Andover Spine Center under the care of Chris Condon.

The Bombay, India native had been seeking medical advice for years, but doctor after doctor continually recommended spinal surgery, a procedure that includes the risk of paralysis and even death. As Shah's quest wore on, a relative suggested he look into chiropractic treatment.

After first experiencing debilitating pain in 1998, Shah, now 60, began his first treatment at Andover Spine Center in 2001, and says he is now nearly pain-free.

"He's made a recovery to the degree that his life has returned to normal," said Condon, owner and director of the center.

Although Shah's condition developed over a long period of time, it came to the forefront one day while he was traveling.

"I thought maybe I slept in a strange position during the night," he said.

Shah was eventually hospitalized for 10 weeks and couldn't return to his office for 15 months.

"I was not able to drive a car," he said. "There was tingling all the time in my left hand. My whole palm was numb."

Due to the distress on his spine,

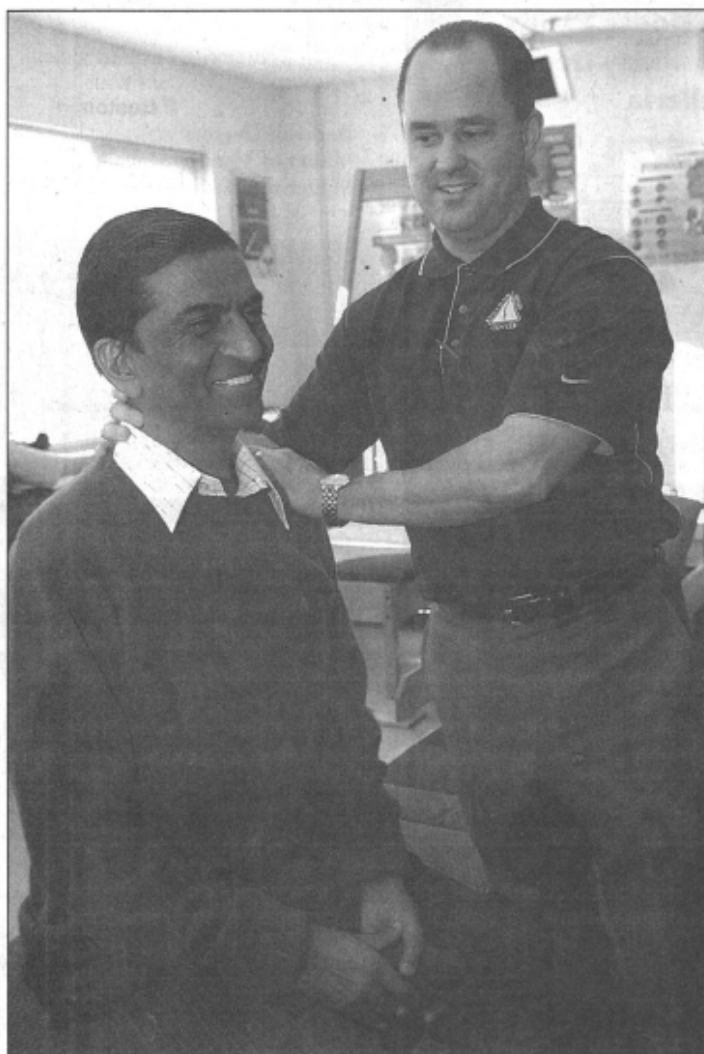


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Shah's left hand was rendered weaker than his right, and the pain was so bad he could no longer travel on business, he said.

"It was very, very painful. I was taking painkillers since 1998. And later it was a very heavy dose of OxyContin," he said.

Upon the suggestion of his daughter's father-in-law, who had lived in the United States for 20 years before settling in India, Shah decided to seek medical treatment in America.

"We flew within a week. I came straight to Boston," he said.

After an X-ray was taken of his spine at Massachusetts General Hospital, Shah was diagnosed with spinal stenosis (pressure around his spinal chord), spondylosis of the cervical and lumbar regions (a degenerative change to spinal segments), and herniated disks in three portions of his back.

In all, Shah saw more than a dozen doctors in India and the United States before coming to the Andover Spine Center.

"All of them suggested surgery," said Shah.

But Condon was confident he could treat Shah through an alternative treatment. Condon began his treatment of Shah with deep muscle work and spinal adjusting five days a week for three months. Four-day-a-week sessions for four to six weeks then followed in 2003, 2004. Shah is now currently staying in Massachusetts with his wife for a fourth treatment.

"He was in dire straits. He had multiple different opinions from different surgeons," said Condon. "He wasn't sure what to do and that's how he ended up coming to me."

Although the road to recovery was long, Shah can now travel, as well as drive a car.

"I feel much better. My strength in the left hand is almost back," he said, now five years removed from his first treatment. "It was worth the trip. It has made my life worth living."

"Just by geography it's unique," said Condon. "It's a nice testimony to the body's ability to recover."

Shah is eager to share his story because of the benefits he says he's experienced from chiropractic treatment.

"You can see the effect only after some time," he said. "But the effect will be long-lasting."