

What Is the Origin of the Craniosacral System and Its Therapy?

While the existence of the cardiovascular and respiratory rhythms is not disputed today, a debate concerning their reality raged in medical communities around the globe for centuries. Ever today, treatment for afflictions associated with these systems remains as diverse as the diseases and their individual practitioners - especially in the area of health maintenance. The history of the Craniosacral system's discovery is fairly recent.

In the early 1900s, as an osteopathic student in Kirksville, Missouri, **Dr. William G. Sutherland** was struck by an idea. He saw that the bones of the skull were designed, as they were to provide the opportunity for movement, in relationship to each other. For more than 20 years he pondered the prospect of moveable bones in the adult skull. He preformed makeshift experiments on himself with helmet-like devices designed to impose variable controlled and sustained pressures on different parts of his head. His wife then recorded personality changes he displayed in response to different pressure applications; he described head pains, problems with coordination, etc., related to the varied pressures. In the early 1930s, under a pseudonym in the *Minnesota Osteopathic Journal*, Dr. Sutherland published his first article about this work.

Based on his experiments, he developed a system of examination and treatment for the bones of the skull. With some patient success, Dr. Sutherland organized a small group of osteopaths who studied cranial work with him.

His system became known as Cranial Osteopathy. Because so little was known about how it worked and because results with patients seemed at times to be miraculous, Sutherland's system acquired an understandably esoteric reputation.

In 1970, during a surgery on a patient's neck, Dr. Upledger view the rhythmical movement of a membranous boundary of what appeared to be a hydraulic system. None of his colleagues nor any of the medical texts had an explanation for his observation that the Dura Mater, the outer layer of the meningeal membrane, in the neck visibly moved in and out at about 10 cycles per minute. He concluded that pressure inside the membrane sack was fluctuating rhythmically.

Two years later Dr. Upledger attended a seminar, which explained Sutherland's ideas and taught some of his evaluation and treatment techniques. Coupling his scientific background with a tactile sensitivity, **Dr. Upledger was quick to understand how a hydraulic system might function inside a membranous sac encased within the skull and canal of the spinal column. Dr. Upledger incorporated and refined Dr. Sutherland's techniques with success.**

In 1975 he was asked to join the Osteopathic College at Michigan State University as a clinician-researcher and professor in the Department Biomechanics. He led a multidisciplinary research team made up of anatomists, physiologists, biophysicists and bioengineers through the maze of research, which first established the scientific basis for the Craniosacral system.

The team was able to explain in scientific and practical terms the function of the Craniosacral system. It also showed how this system could be used to evaluate and treat malfunctions involving the brain and spinal cord as well as a myriad of other health problems that previously were misunderstood or poorly understood.

In the two decades since his initial research, Dr. Upledger has written three textbooks: *Craniosacral Therapy*; *Craniosacral Therapy II, Beyond the Dura* and *Somato Emotional Release and Beyond* explain the functioning of the Craniosacral system in detail. In 1985, he established The Upledger Institute, Inc., a clinical and educational resource center. Since then, thousands of healthcare professionals have studied the therapeutic value of the Craniosacral system.