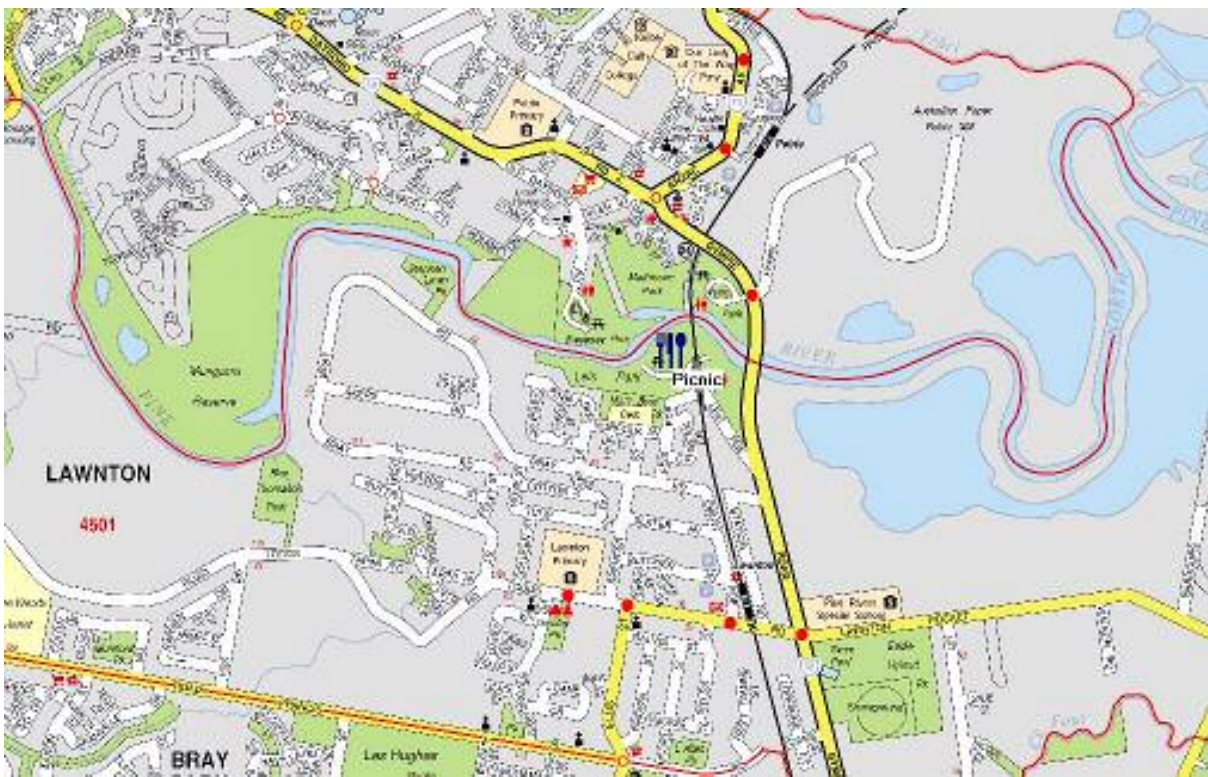


# Spine Tingles

Newsletter of the Scoliosis Support Group of Qld Inc.

February, 2004

## Picnic Map



**Leis Park, Lawnton**  
**Sunday 29 February, 2004**  
**3.00pm**  
**Details on page 3**

## Scoliosis Support Group of Queensland Inc

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This newsletter is published quarterly, normally before a picnic and meeting.

### Warning:

Information published in this newsletter represents views of the authors and is not to be seen as a recommendation or views of the Society. We aim to inform our members of as many options as possible - It is the decision of individual patients to decide on their treatment in consultation with their doctor.

## MEDLINEplus: a reliable source of medical information on the www

<http://medlineplus.gov/>

MEDLINEplus is a reputable and comprehensive website maintained by the National Library of Medicine (U.S.). The purpose of the website is educational. There is no advertising or endorsement of any company or product. Content is available at no charge, and in every case the source of the content is clearly displayed.

MEDLINEplus provides:

- 650 health topics on conditions, diseases and wellness\*
- links to other reputable sites (all links are maintained)
- a medical encyclopaedia (the adam Health Illustrated Encyclopedia)
- the Merriam-Webster medical dictionary
- current health news
- over 165 interactive animated health tutorials
- drug information
- the PubMed interface to MEDLINE

PubMed is the free version of MEDLINE, the National Library of Medicine's database of references to more than 11 million articles published in 4600 biomedical journals. This is where you will find the most up-to-date research information on a disease or medical condition. MEDLINE does not contain the full text of articles, only bibliographical references and summaries. Most of the articles listed are very technical and are written for health professionals. However, if you find an article on MEDLINE relating to scoliosis which you would like to read, let us know and we will do our best to obtain it for you.

\*Each health topic contains at least one pre-formulated MEDLINE search using the PubMed interface, listing research articles from the last 6 months to two years.

### Support Group funding

We have recently received notice from our funding body (Queensland Health) that our community self care funding program has been extended until 30 June 2007.

This came as a pleasant surprise, as we thought we would have to work on a new application when our current service agreement expires on 30 June 2004.

The 2004/2007 service agreement will provide an annual level of funding the same as the 2003/2004 allocation (\$5,177.00)

## **A Patron for our Support Group**

The Annual General Meeting in September 2003 had great pleasure in electing Dr Robert Labrom MBBS(Qld) MSc(Surg) FRACS(Orth) as patron of the support group.

Dr Labrom writes:

Idiopathic scoliosis is a condition which affects teenage girls more than boys. This condition affects all races and is common in the Western world. Brisbane has, for many years, had great experience in managing this problem, both with non-operative methods such as bracing, as well as surgical options.

Recently, I returned to Brisbane after spending several years in Vancouver, Canada, gaining more experience in the treatment of idiopathic scoliosis. My experience also includes other types of scoliosis, and scoliosis related to neuromuscular conditions.

My practice includes activities at both the Royal Children's Hospital and the Mater Hospital.

The use of endoscopic techniques for correcting idiopathic scoliosis has become accepted worldwide and is now being practiced at the Mater Children's Hospital. The Royal Children's Hospital also has the experience and the capacity to offer endoscopic surgery in conjunction with the more traditional posterior spinal surgeries for idiopathic scoliosis as well as other types of scoliosis.

It remains the aim of all spinal surgeons who treat scoliosis to avoid the need for a spinal surgery. The use of well-moulded surgical braces can be of great benefit to children who approach this surgical indication group.

Scoliosis remains a fascinating condition that should not be feared. The more educated and aware patients and families become with regard to the condition, the less anxious, and a better treatment plan can be designed for each particular patient.

## **Support Group picnics**

As you all know the support group organises four picnics per year. For the past few years the picnics have been poorly attended and this is very discouraging to the executive committee. We are obliged by our service agreement with Queensland Health to hold social events for our membership.

If every family in the support group who lives in the metropolitan area committed themselves to attend one picnic per year, that would ensure a very satisfactory attendance at each picnic.

We realise that not every picnic date or venue is suitable to everyone, but unless we hear from our members, **HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN AND WHERE TO HOLD THEM?!**

So here's an idea ... we will hold another picnic in May or June. Would someone out there like to contact us and suggest a date and place for this next picnic? Even Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast members may offer!

## **Next Picnic**

**Leis Park**  
Leis Pde  
Lawnton

Sunday 29 February 2004  
3.00pm

Map Reference:  
UBD 98 K5

Look for the Support Group  
Banner!

Electric BBQ available

Please support the Group and  
attend the Picnic!

**In the event of heavy rain, the  
picnic will move to the  
McIntyre residence:**

**37 Oleron Tce**  
**PETRIE**

## Treating Adult Scoliosis

**Treating adult scoliosis** / Edgar G. Dawson

*Advance for directors in rehabilitation* 12(5) (May 2003): 43,44,46.\*

The author of this article is an orthopaedic surgeon, specializing in the treatment of spinal disorders, including scoliosis, at The Spine Institute, Santa Monica, California.

He writes that scoliosis in adults can be caused by a progression of the condition from childhood which went undetected or wasn't treated early. Another cause is the degeneration of the spinal elements from osteoporosis, disc degeneration or compression fractures.

Chronic and severe back pain is the primary complaint among adults with scoliosis. Other complaints are a progressing deformity, and, in rare cases, reduced heart and lung function.

Dr Dawson describes various types and causes of back pain which adults may experience from scoliosis: muscle fatigue pain, pedicular and functional zone pain, facet disease, spondylosis (arthritis of the spine).

Before any treatment can take place, the specialist must determine the location and duration of the pain, with a thorough physical and neurological examination.

Most adults with scoliosis do not require surgery. Treatment and pain management focuses on correcting conditions that can cause or aggravate the pain. Treatment may include: weight loss, low-impact exercise to improve muscle tone and strength, applying moist heat to painful areas, anti-inflammatory medications, and osteoporosis treatment. Dr Dawson strongly recommends physical therapy for all his scoliosis patients, regardless of whether their treatment is conservative or surgical.

Dr Dawson does not normally recommend surgery for adults with curves in the 30° to 50° range, as long as the curves are not progressing. Surgery will be considered if:

- the thoracic curve is greater than 50° with persistent pain
- the thoracolumbar (mid and low back curve) is progressing
- the lumbar (low back curve) causes persistent pain
- the thoracic curve is causing decreased heart and lung function

Pain control and increasing disability are the reasons most adults decide to have surgery, though physical appearance is another consideration.

Typically adults can expect a 50%-60% correction of their curves. Surgery will not create a perfectly straight spine, but will help adults achieve postural balance and relieve pain.

Surgery may involve removing an intervertebral disc, combined with spinal instrumentation and fusion. The instrumentation includes rods, bars, wires, screws, etc that work to stabilize the spine and enhance the fusion.

The average age of Dr Dawson's patients is 65, and he has successfully operated on patients older than 80. The average recovery period for adults after spinal surgery is 5 days in hospital. It may take up to a year for them to achieve a high level of function, depending on how strong they were before surgery.

The author concludes that with today's advanced medical techniques, spinal surgery has a higher level of success and lower complication rates than ever before. Because this type of surgery is so specialized, patients should choose a surgeon who is trained and experienced in treating adult scoliosis.

\*Please contact us if you would like a copy of this article