

# Challenging sciatica, and winning

Jackie Christopher, who turns 60 this month, had never been to a chiropractor.

She was aware of the science but remained a bit leery.

Still, the sciatica in her right hip and leg was becoming increasingly limiting and painful. She was finding less glee in her approach to every day. There was less bounce in her step.

The administrative assistant to the five-county Mid-Shore Special Education Consortium, headquartered in Easton, she found that the sciatica was affecting her ability to drive.

On a trip of any length — say from her home in Caroline County to visit her son in southern Anne Arundel County — it got so she might have to stop “two or three times” to get out of the car to stretch and ease the pain.

She knew she had to do something.

But no surgery, she told herself. “I do not want surgery.”

She had been reading articles in the Star-Democrat of patients hailing the success of their treatment by Easton chiropractor Dr. Christopher Cianci.

She decided the time had come. She made her first appointment.

It was just before Christmas in 2010.

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“Mrs. Christopher,” said Dr. Cianci, “like many other patients, had a sciatica problem off and on for many years. When she finally got to my office, it had gotten really bad.

“A lot of people don’t realize that all nerves are made up of two types of fibers -- sensory or pain-sensing fibers and for this discussion, let’s call them ‘function fibers.’ They control strength, reflexes, blood flow and so forth,” Dr. Cianci continued. “Function fibers don’t sense pain at all.”

The typical sciatic patient



## The Cianci Chronicles

**Dr. Christopher Cianci**  
**Licensed chiropractor,**  
**Easton Md.**

*(Authored by Bruce Hotchkiss)*

with low back pain may have had several bouts of sciatic pain that came and went, only feeling pain when the sensory fibers are irritated..

“Very often,” Dr. Cianci said, “whether pain is present or not, the function fibers will be affected and a doctor will notice various malfunctions in the hips and legs, and often foot reflexes are diminished. A sciatic patient who currently does not have pain may not be aware of these functional deficits.

“Sciatic patients may complain that they can’t walk for any extended distance, that they may find shopping to be tiresome. They may find that just taking care of their home and yard more and more difficult. In some case, they may find the need to sit down more often.”

Fortunately, Dr. Cianci explained, advanced diagnostic instruments are now available that help “assess nerve function whether pain is present or not.

There are also some neurological examinations to test individual muscles in and around the hips, legs, and feet that assess the extent to which nerves are involved.

“Like many others, Jackie Christopher said that when she

first became our patient, her sciatica was starting to impact her mood and attitude.

She had lost her laugh and her usual big smile.

“Fortunately, we were able to restore nerve function, give her her strength back and now she is back to her bouncy, happy self,” Dr. Cianci said.

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Now, some 18 months later, later, Jackie Christopher is pretty much back on her game, she says.

The Preston mother of two grown sons, she has been employed by the special education consortium for nearly six years, responsible to the special education supervisors in Talbot, Queen Anne’s, Caroline, Kent and Dorchester counties.

It is quiet in the consortium’s large office in the Talbot County Education Center these days. School is out, the many desks are unoccupied, the computers off and at rest, but Christopher, a 12-month employee, is filling and labeling boxes and tying up loose ends of the just-ended school year.

The work on the consortium does not come to a halt. Special education attention continues for those who need it in all of the counties — not in the classroom but in the field, so to speak — and Christopher tracks it all.

It’s easier for her now.

The sciatic pain of the past is vastly relieved — “I can drive for an hour and a half or two hours absolutely pain free,” she said.

In addition, the mere act of walking has become more precise.

“I walk better,” she said, with obvious pleasure and pride. “I am not favoring the right leg anymore. I don’t shuffle. I feel in balance.”

And with regular visits with Dr. Cianci, she intends not only to stay that way but to continue to improve.