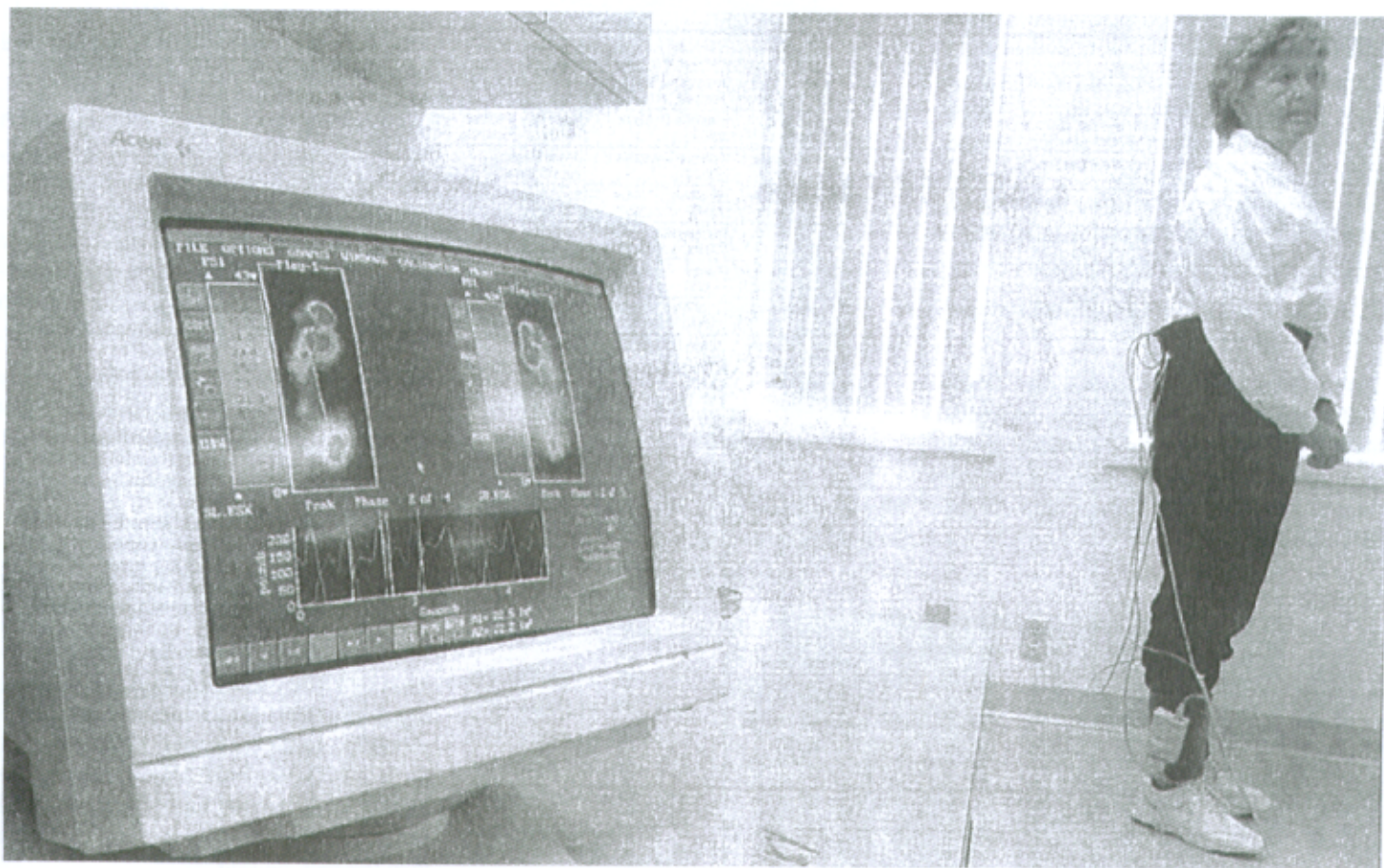


Take a stand against pain



Vestal podiatrist Dr. George Trachtenberg uses computer graphics to map out a patient's foot pattern, then the person's gait is analyzed for inefficiencies and problems. Joan Brutvan of Johnson City, who is attached to the computer, had a long history of back pain that she says has been successfully treated by Dr. Trachtenberg's techniques.

Got a throbbing head? Pain in the neck, back, hips or knees? Blame your feet!

The link between a migraine or pain elsewhere in the body and foot-related postural problems is not as strange an idea as it seems at first glance, says Dr. George C. Trachtenberg.

Although originally skeptical that the “hip bone’s connected to the thigh bone” or in this case, the foot bone is connected to the head bone, the Vestal podiatrist says such links illustrate how he’s come to think about the human body. It’s an integrated whole, not a collection of separate parts that need fixing, he said.

You could label Trachtenberg a pioneering holistic podiatrist, blazing a trail in a discipline that’s rarely strayed from the traditional path into complementary medicine.

Trachtenberg’s belief, in a nutshell, is that walking incorrectly can cause a host of muscular-skeletal problems, from headaches to aching shoulders, necks, jaws, arms

and elbows, hips or knees. And if left uncorrected, or surgically repaired without getting to the root of the problem, patients may make the rounds of numerous doctors without finding relief, or undergo operations repeatedly.

He explains: “The vast majority of all lower back and knee problems, not caused by congenital conditions or injury, are actually related to abnormal foot function. Studies show that foot-related postural problems can actually ‘refer’ pain and discomfort to other parts of the body,” he said.

“The interesting fact is, you can experience pain in other areas of your body even if you have no pain in your feet,” he added.

Trachtenberg has tapped technology to analyze how a patient’s gait, or walking technique, has gone wrong. Through a sophisticated network of computer sensors placed on the bottom of a patient’s feet, and multiple video cameras to view the walking process, he analyzes and evaluates the problem. He’ll then suggest a range of remedies

from custom-made orthotics, to physical therapy.

He might even refer patients to a nutritionist or recommend psychological counseling. Oddly enough, some people have difficulty coping with life when they’re no longer in chronic pain, he explained.

Collaboration with other medical practitioners is part and parcel of his holistic philosophy, Trachtenberg pointed out.

The sensors, 960 per shoe, give him thousands of pieces of information about walking stance, from force and pressure applied by the foot to the timing of the roll from heel to toe. He can synchronize the computer information with the video picture, pinpointing exactly where the patient’s gait went wrong.

The technology also helps him pinpoint degenerative muscle, joint or bone conditions early and allow the patient to postpone, if not eliminate, surgery, Trachtenberg said.