



 Cindy Stephenson with Melbourn Headache Centre headache consultant and director Roger O'Toole. Picture: David Caird

VIC News

Melbourne migraine therapy trial a world-first

GENEVIEVE ALISON, Herald Sun

October 17, 2016 3:55pm

 Subscriber only

A MIGRAINE headache therapy offering sufferers relief shifts the focus of treatment from the head to the neck.

And now a Melbourne headache clinic is joining a world-first clinical trial of the Watson headache approach.


Pioneered by Murdoch University researchers Dean Watson and Peter Drummond, the approach's technique focuses on a "rarely diagnosed fault in the top of the spine".

Physiotherapist Roger O'Toole, director of the Melbourne Headache Centre, said up to 80

per cent of headaches were due to a common neck complaint, which was “now the number one suspect in causing a sensitive brain stem”.

“Traditionally, a stiff or painful neck has been considered a symptom of many types of headaches. Now leading researchers from around the world are considering the role of the neck,” Mr O’Toole said.



 Melbourne Headache Centre headache consultant and director Roger O’Toole treats Cindy Stephenson. Picture: David Caird

He said the Watson technique was designed to desensitise pain pathways from the neck to the “headache centre”.

Nurse Cindy Stephenson, 43, of Caroline Springs, said the migraines she experienced growing up intensified after she had twins five years ago.

“I was having 50-60 mini-migraines every day. It felt like my head was going to explode.

“I couldn’t function at all.”



📷 Cindy Stephenson with Melbourne Headache Centre headache consultant and director Roger O'Toole. Picture: David Caird

Over the course of the next three years she vainly “tried everything” from prescription medication to acupuncture.

“I’m constantly in high-pressure situations, and it became unmanageable,” she said.

“Beyond desperate” when she found Mr O’Toole’s clinic, she said after just a few treatments it felt as though a “huge weight had been lifted.”

She was soon able to return to work and now suffers migraines only sporadically.

“I had never considered my neck was the problem. It was the biggest relief,” she said.

genevieve.alison@news.com.au