

Qi Practitioners in the Community: Dr. Robin Armstrong at the UBC Travelling Health Fair

By Dr. Robin Armstrong, Chiropractor & Active Release provider

I recently had the good fortune of participating in UBC's travelling health fair for faculty and staff. Various health care providers and healthy living educators travelled from faculty to faculty over two weeks, lecturing or providing one on one consultation. I met with people one on one, first assessing their posture – Are your hips level? Your shoulders? Are you tilting your neck? How is your weight distributed from side to side? – Next discussing lifestyle factors that may be contributing to any postural imbalances or pain. One day I would be in a board room with windows to the old dentistry clinic, the next day a heritage building with mountain and ocean views (my favorite, I must admit).

A few trends began to emerge as I was meeting with employees. Whether I was in the dentistry faculty, the forestry department, or mathematics, many of the employees or staff shared similar characteristics. Those who had regular stretching and/or exercise routines had fewer imbalances, less pain, and more energy. People who tried to make their workstation fit to them – versus setting up their workstation to uniquely serve their needs – complained of recurrent headaches, neck pain and mid back pain.

Employees at UBC fortunately have an on site ergonomist that can assess their workstation and give them tips to improve their set up. I found myself recommending this regularly until the person in charge of employee health told me in a panic to stop doing that! Apparently the ergonomist is overworked and there is a long wait for workstation assessments. This tells me how common an issue this is. I wouldn't be able to sleep at night if I didn't share with you my top five tips for a healthy workstation that I shared with the UBC employees.

A Quick Guide to working with your Workstation

1. Take regular breaks! Try this: open your palms, squeeze your shoulder blades together, and make a double chin so that you lengthen the back of your neck. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat.
2. Your mouse, your keyboard, and your arm rest should be at a height so that your shoulders are relaxed away from your ears, and arms rest by your side.
3. Don't reach for your mouse, keep it close to the keyboard.
4. Your screen should be arms length away when you are leaning back in your chair to avoid jutting the head forward.
5. Your chair should support the curve in your low back and you should be able to sit back in the chair without the front pressing into your legs.

I had a great time at UBC meeting with a diverse set of employees in a diverse number of locations, discovering the one problem that unites us all: computers!

Wishing you more hunting and gathering, and less hunching and typing,

Dr. Robin