

Experts: Compulsive texting causing neck injuries

By Lily Dayton, Los Angeles Times

Dean Fishman, a chiropractor in Florida, was examining an X-ray of a 17-year-old patient's neck in 2009 when he noticed something unusual. The ghostly image of her vertebral column showed a reversal of the curvature that normally appears in the cervical spine – a degenerative state he'd most often seen in middle-aged people who had spent several decades of their life in poor posture.

“That’s when I looked over at the patient,” Fishman says. She was slumped in her chair, head tilted downward, madly typing away on her cellphone. When he mentioned to the patient’s mother that the girl’s posture could be causing her headaches, he got what he describes as an “emotional response.” It seemed the teen spent much of her life in that position. Right then, Fishman says, “I knew I was on to something.”

He theorized that prolonged periods of tilting her head downward to peer into her mobile device had created excessive strain on the cervical spine, causing a repetitive stress injury that ultimately led to spinal degeneration. He began looking through all the recent X-rays he had of young people – many of whom had come in for neck pain or headaches – and he saw the same thing: signs of premature degeneration.

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