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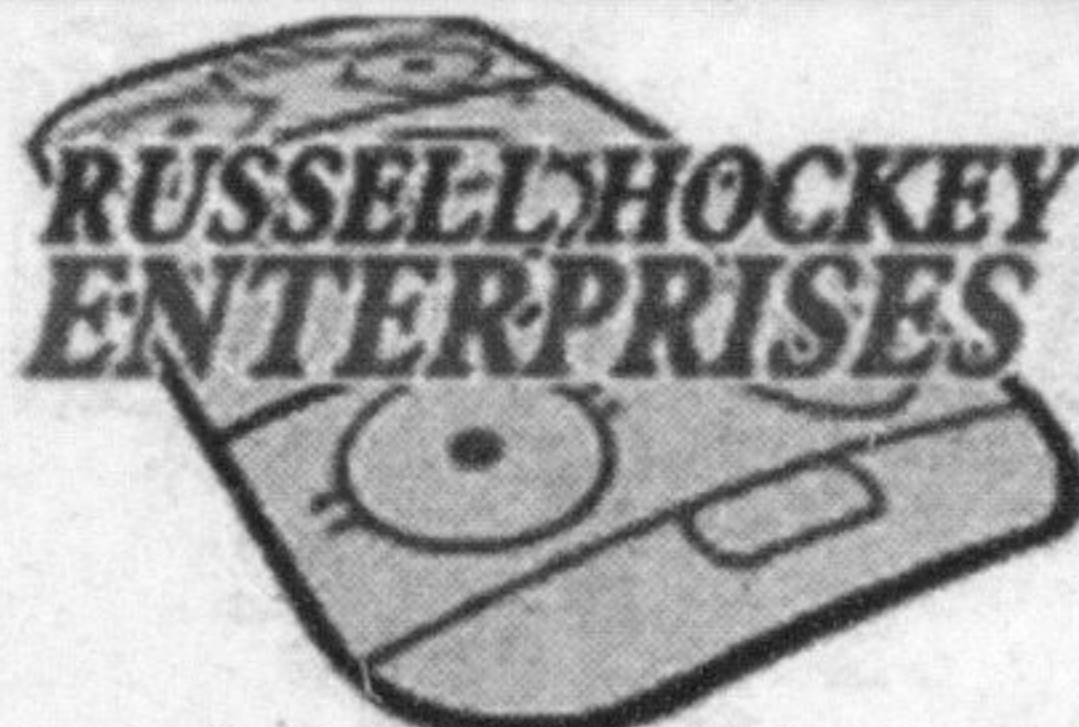
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Healthy Living

The bone whisperer

(NC)—Watch any "Western" movie and, when the hero gets roughed up by a bucking bronco or hurt in a fight, there's sure to be a visit to the local "sawbones", known more commonly these days as the doctor.

At the time, when it came to simply fixing broken bones and other kinds of basic repairs, the term sawbones was probably an accurate description.

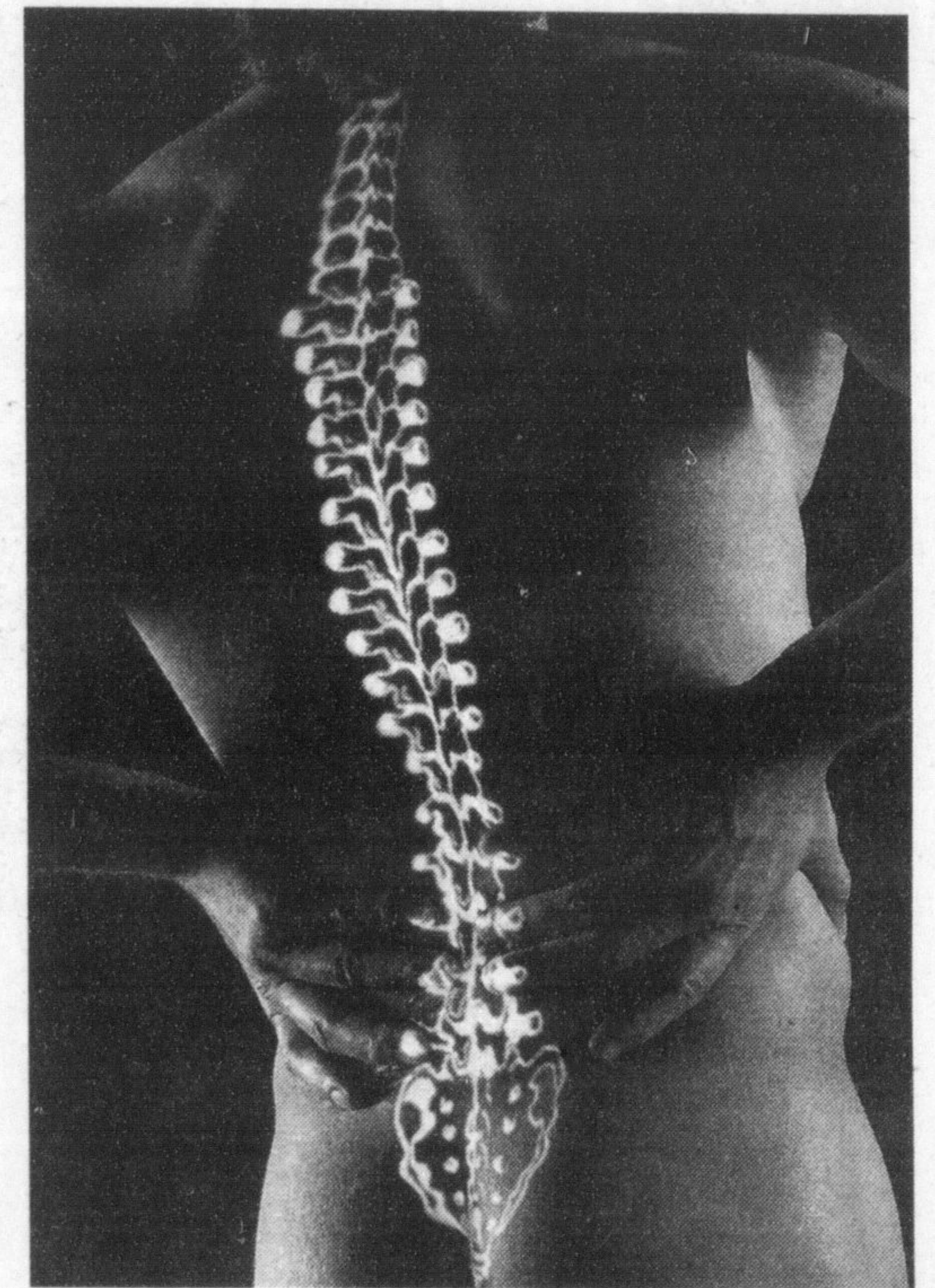
But today, when you talk about orthopaedic surgery, the picture has changed. Orthopaedic surgery involves everything from mending complex fractures, fusing sections of the spine, bone grafts and dental implants.

All told, the economic costs for bone and joint problems are extremely high. These kinds of problems, called musculoskeletal disorders, cost Canadians \$16.4 billion every year; only heart disease costs more. And, with Canada's aging population, the costs are just going to get higher. For example, at the age of 75 and over, over 50% of the population suffers from some kind of bone and joint problem.

These days, researchers are working towards using the body's natural processes to actually heal bones and joints, not just mend them. That's the promise behind work by bone specialist Dr. Harvey Goldberg of the University of Western Ontario.

Dr. Goldberg has spent the past ten years studying and collecting detailed information about a group of proteins that help produce minerals in bones and are essential to their growth. He's used this information to experiment with and artificially produce protein fragments (known as peptides) that can help stimulate growth in damaged bones.

Dr. Goldberg recently received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to help refine technology that uses custom-made proteins to help regenerate bones.



Refining this technology and demonstrating that it can consistently work is an important step towards making it commercially available as a medical procedure for patients. This is good news for patients because the prospect of healing bones is better in the long term than just fixing bones.

CIHR has a number of funding programs that help researchers commercialize their work, such as the Proof of Principle funding received by Dr. Goldberg. The program has helped a number of researchers get patents on their work, led to technology licenses and the creation of new companies. For more information, visit www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

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Adita Shirzad D.D.
Denturist

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Nutrition Notes

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