

■ Chiropractic risks: What does the evidence say?

Ian Coulter, Ph.D. is the author of an article in the September 1998 issue of the journal *Integrative Medicine* that examines the risks associated with Chiropractic care. The article, entitled "Efficacy and Risks of Chiropractic Manipulation: What Does the Evidence Suggest?" points out some interesting facts:

- Chiropractors perform more than **90%** of spinal manipulations. (Manipulation is the generic, non-specific medical term for Adjustment).
- The risk of complication with cervical (neck) adjustments is **6.39 per 10 million** adjustments.
- The risk of complication with lumbar (low back) adjustments is **1 in 100 million** adjustments.

The risk of complication in some common medical procedures and medications were not near as good:

- The risk of complication with the use of NSAIDS (aspirin, Tylenol, ibuprofen, etc.) is **3.2 in 1000**.
- The risk of complication in cervical spine surgeries is **15.6 in 1000**.

By way of commentary, there has been a lot of news about the dangers of Chiropractic care over the past few months. This article clearly points out that Chiropractic procedures are significantly safer than many common medical procedures. For the best reflection of how safe Chiropractic is, ask your Chiropractor how much his/her malpractice insurance costs. Then ask your medical doctor the same question. The difference will surprise you. ▲

■ Medical research authors guilty of misrepresenting Chiropractic facts

An article in the May, 1995 issue of *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* reports that numerous medical authors have misrepresented the facts when reporting on the incidence of injury related to chiropractic care. In many cases, the “chiropractic” care that caused injury was not even performed by a chiropractor yet the research author chose to report them as examples of chiropractic care anyway.

The article reports on some 40 cases of iatrogenic (literally, doctor caused) chiropractic injury that was incorrectly attributed to chiropractors either through medical misrepresentation of the literature, inaccurate reporting by medical authors or inaccurate reporting by medico-legal journalists.

Listed examples of injury to patients that were attributed to chiropractic were performed by individuals as varied as untrained medical doctors, osteopaths, naturopaths, physiotherapists, a Kung-Fu practitioner, a spouse, an Indian barber, a blind, unlicensed health club masseur, more than a few “unknowns” and a couple of the patients were even injured when they tried to adjust themselves. ▲

■ Integrating chiropractic care into health care system will reduce overall costs

A paper presented at the *1999 World Federation of Chiropractic Bi-Annual Assembly* reports that integrating chiropractic care into the health care system will lower overall costs. The paper was authored by Pran Manga, Ph.D. of the University of Ottawa in Ottawa, Canada.

According to Manga, "Chiropractic care is a cost-effective alternative to other professions' management of neuromusculoskeletal [NMS] conditions. It is also safer, increasingly accepted by the public as reflected in the growing [use] and high patient retention rates and there is much and repeated evidence that patients prefer chiropractic over other forms of care for the more common musculoskeletal conditions. The integration of chiropractic into the health care system should serve to reduce health care costs, improve accessibility to needed care, and improve health outcomes."

Manga also found that when studies compare the cost of chiropractic care with other disciplines "it is essential to include and [add up] all relevant treatment costs for the entire episode of illness or injury." A problem in some cost effectiveness studies, Manga says, is that the entire cost of the medical care is not included in the study. "Medical management is a lot more complex and costly involving one or more (and frequently repeat) prescription drugs, referrals to other caregivers including specialists and physiotherapists, several diagnostic tests, diagnostic imaging and sometimes hospitalization as well."

Since chiropractors tend to do most of the work themselves in the care of their patients, "the cost of chiropractic care [reported in studies] is likely to be all inclusive and accurate, whereas the cost of medical management of NMS cases is more likely to be understated." ▲

■ Chiropractic instruction helps prevent work injuries

A 1998 study reported in the journal *Australasian Chiropractic & Osteopathy* [issue 7(1);8-14] found that when chiropractors educated a group of manual-labor workers about proper spinal care, the average cost of work related spinal injuries dropped significantly.

Sixty workers were divided into two groups, one of which received a two hour educational training class conducted by a chiropractor. The other group received no instruction whatsoever. The training involved instruction in spinal anatomy, proper lifting, exercises, what causes back pain and injury and treatment options.

In the six months before the training, the average cost of spinal injury cases was \$451.00. In the six months after the training program, the average cost per case dropped 40% to \$269. ▲