



Vienna Chiropractic Associates, P.C.

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(Note: Unless otherwise stated, the research discussed in this "Roundup" is reviewed in our textbook, Somatovisceral Aspects of Chiropractic: An Evidence-Based Approach.)

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At an international conference in the early 1990's, a chiropractic research team presented a spectacular case report. A 21-year-old man had been in a coma for more than one year after an auto accident. After three chiropractic adjustments, he woke up. At the time of the report, the patient was not only awake, but was able to walk with the help of crutches.

While this case is highly unusual, it may represent an extreme instance of a more everyday phenomenon. Chiropractic and biomedical theorists have suggested that misalignments or restrictions of the vertebra ("subluxations") in the neck can create reflex spasms in certain blood vessels of the brain. This may create an oxygen deficiency severe enough to render a portion of the brain "electrically silent," but not severe enough to kill brain cells. Depending on the location and extent of this electrical silence, symptoms may be as mild as a slight mental fogginess, irritability or fatigue. On the other hand, they can be as severe as blindness, paralysis or coma. However, because these brain regions are electrically silent and not dead, restoring normal oxygen levels by correcting the subluxations can reverse the process. This can be likened to awakening the brain from a state of partial hibernation.

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In the 1990's, an Atlanta area research team studied the effects of chiropractic adjustments on ten HIV-positive patients. These patients

were divided into two groups. The five "experimental" patients were given adjustments to correct subluxations ("pinched nerves") of the upper neck. The five "control" patients had an impressive-looking instrument applied to their upper necks, but no actual adjustment was delivered.

One of the factors monitored in this study was "CD4 count"—a count of a certain population of white blood cells. Declining CD4 count is a sensitive indicator of immune deficiency, which is why this measure is routinely monitored in HIV-positive patients. In the control group, CD4 count declined 7.96% in a period of six months. In the experimental group, CD4 levels increased 48% in the same period of time.

While the results of this study should not in any way be construed to imply that chiropractic can replace medical care in the treatment of AIDS, they are part of a growing body of evidence indicating that subluxation may interfere with immune function. In recent years, researchers have demonstrated that white blood cells can send and receive chemical messages to and from the nervous system. It is as though white blood cells were mobile neurons with defensive capabilities. This new understanding lays important groundwork for understanding why disturbed nerve function resulting from subluxation may disrupt immune function.

In fact, some patients have experienced improvements in auto-immune disorders and allergies under chiropractic care. This implies that chiropractic adjustments are not simply "immune boosters," but actually may improve "immune accuracy." This effect would be beneficial whether the patient has a condition as serious as AIDS or no apparent illness at all. Hopefully, future research will verify this "immune accuracy" effect and clarify the mechanisms responsible for it.

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Long-term headache sufferers sometimes find themselves taking pain medication more than three times per week for months on end. Recently, clinical researchers have identified a syndrome in which such frequent use of pain medication can interfere with the body's natural pain-blocking process. This leads to a situation in which the headache comes back (rebounds) with increased severity as the last dose of pain medication wears off. A cycle is established of more and more frequent use of higher and higher doses of medication for more and more severe headaches. This phenomenon is called "analgesic headache" or "rebound headache."

In the long run, this constant use of even over-the-counter pain medication can strain the kidneys, liver and other vital organs, triggering potentially life-threatening health problems.

Recent clinical research indicates that chiropractic care can bring substantial relief from many types of headache without drugs. This is not done by "shutting off the pain," but by assisting the body in correcting spinal nerve irritation. This nerve irritation can aggravate or even cause many types of headache. The long-term advantage of a drug-free alternative for headache relief cannot be overstated.

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