

Chiropractic: Just for back pain?

Since the majority of visits to a chiropractor are for the care of back and neck pain, most people think of chiropractors as back doctors. And since most back and neck pain is caused by the presence of acute or chronic vertebral subluxations, chiropractic care has developed an enviable track record in the care of these patients.

The scientific literature is replete with references to chiropractic's superiority in treating patients with back pain -- and with unequaled patient satisfaction. (Manga et al, 1993; Stano & Smith, 1996; British Med J, 1990; Dabbs & Lauretti, 1995; New Zealand Report, 1979; Shekelle & Adams, 1992; Ebrall, 1992).

This public perception of chiropractors as primarily back doctors, continues to dictate utilization trends (by health care consumers), and even insurance coverage for chiropractic care. Chiropractors, happy with this incremental boost in public and scientific acceptance, have often failed in their responsibility to educate the public to the bigger idea and greater impact the vertebral subluxation complex has on health.

Unfortunately, the results of pigeonholing chiropractic, and subsequent under utilization of care, is tragic. The majority of spinal subluxations are painless and can persist for many years without symptoms, while silently undermining the body's function and health in significant ways. I often tell my patients that they are lucky to have experienced back pain. Pain motivated them to have their spine examined, revealing dysfunction, which can have a significant impact on their entire health picture.

The most common problems in early childhood can be linked to spinal dysfunction, originating from trauma related to the birth process, and early challenges of toddlerhood.

With every fall a youngster takes, the tiny neck, which supports his bowling ball sized head, is impacted. The area in children that sustains the most subluxation related damage is the upper cervical spine. The integrity of this area of the spine is essential for proper function of the tissues of the ear, nose and throat (including the tonsils, adenoids, eustachian tubes, and mucous membranes.) Brain stem and vagal nerve involvement have long been suspected in babies with colic. The diaphragm, a muscular sling responsible for breathing, also receives innervation from the mid-cervical spine. This area of the spine has been under chiropractic scrutiny for years with its relationship to SIDS.