

## Dropsy, Apoplexy and Subluxation

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I treat subluxations every day; I'm up to my elbows in subluxations. That's why I am always confused by the "vertebral subluxation complex." (Like pornography: Maybe I can't define it, but I know it when I see it.)

Many chiropractors keep looking for subluxations though, often with surface EMGs; infrared images; thermographic pictures; galvanic skin resistance graphing; and some "sexy" muscle testing. But I can't understand what all the fuss is about. If they would just ask me, I could show them a whole bunch of these subluxations. All they have to do is just take an average spine and goad it, poke around, nudge it a bit, and before you know it, a subluxation just pops up to greet you. No problem.

But finding the elusive subluxation is not really the issue with chiropractors. It is the question, "How many subluxations can dance on the head of a pin?" that really sets our passions ablaze. Why is that? Why do we behave like schoolboys arguing over our baseball heroes' batting averages when we discuss this subluxation thing? That's why I divide the profession into two groups: those who like the word "subluxation," and those who don't.

I don't - and I grew up with it. My father was a Palmer-method chiropractor, and even he thought it was unwieldy. "Talk about nerve pressure...talk about pinched nerves," he might say, "but forget about telling patients about something defined as 'less than a luxation.'" Patients could care less, he'd claim. "Something's locked; stuck; fixated; restricted; irritated; etc., and if it makes the doctor happy to give it an exotic name, that's fine. Just fix it, please!" That is why I suggest relegating the term, "subluxation" to an archaic list in medical terminology. Such a list includes dropsy; apoplexy; lumbago; rheumatism; hysteria in women; and piles.

Now, for a commercial: Earlier this year I attended the Research Agenda Conference (RAC) to hang out with the "eggheads" in the profession. All DCs should get down on their knees and offer thanks that this event and its participants exist. It does my heart good to see research-oriented chiropractors with the proper credentials conducting studies that help validate the hands-on treatment that I give all day long, several days a week. It takes money, and it will take a bunch more, but at least it's happening. I'm not that old, but even I can remember when the only PhD doing research in the profession was Dr. Clarence Wient, who was associated with East Coast colleges. Unfortunately, his PhD was in anthropology.

So, is this group interested in researching the wily subluxation? Of course it is, but the emphasis won't be on "subluxations that might cause elephantiasis." Neurological aspects of the subluxation are the crux of the mystery. One person's "subluxation terrorist" is another person's "subluxation freedom fighter." This is serious business, with serious implications, needing serious common terminology. But too often, the discussion is placed in a setting of chest-thumping and aggrandizement. Stay calm.

What about the subluxation-based practice? I have one of those. What the hell else am I doing all day? I resent the orthodox purists in chiropractic that say that I'm not "worthy" if I don't mentally

envision the "glowing ember of nerve irritation" every time I adjust my patients. If my adjustment looks like your adjustment, what else could I be treating - the "air subluxation" that floats above the spine? Is it the "five-element" subluxation that somehow links world peace with eternal salvation?

It's just that the subluxation thing has made me tired. I'm fatigued. I want another word, phrase, computer graphic - anything that can better express what I'm treating. I respect this elemental hallmark of the profession, because without it we would just be a second-rate osteopathic profession. We are the best at what we do, and we usually know why we do it. But (Help me out here!) has anyone taken a vote lately to see if DCs all like this term "subluxation?" If the pop music artist Prince can change his name to a symbol and back again (the "artist formerly known as 'Prince,'" now formerly known as a symbol), surely we can fix the "lesion formerly known as the subluxation."

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