

# Chiropractic to Play a Vital Role in Anti-Aging Medicine

Editor's Note: Philip Santiago, DC, of Lake Hiawatha, New Jersey, was the only chiropractic member of the United States Olympic Sports Medicine Team in the XXVth Olympiad in Barcelona. He is currently a member of the board of directors of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine (A4M).

People are living longer today than ever before, and the trend is expected to continue. Consider these facts. Since the founding of our nation, the average life span of Americans has nearly tripled, rising from just 26 years in 1776 to nearly 76 today. And actuarial tables in the not-too-distant future will list the average life span at 110!

Although people of every age are interested in extending their life span, the baby boomers are the group propelling anti-aging medicine into the spotlight. Baby boomers are clamoring to find ways to look young and stay health and vigorous as they age.

## Baby Boomer Trends

Baby boomers, people who were born between 1946 and 1964, are the largest generation in U.S. history. There are almost 80 million baby boomers in the United States today. Approximately every seven seconds, another boomer turns 50. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that one in nine baby boomers (nine million) will survive into their late 90s, and that one in 26 (three million) will reach 100.

This population is a formidable group. According to a report issued recently by the Chicago-based nonprofit American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine (A4M), "The baby boom generation has been the single most significant American demographic trend of the 20th century, and baby boomers are poised to make their presence felt in another arena: medicine."

- Over half of all baby boomers use some form of alternative or complementary medicine. A strong majority feels that alternative medical therapies have value.
- The oldest baby boomers have already increased the annual growth rate in the nutrition and nutritional supplement industry by 14 percent to 15 percent -- including annual sales of \$1.5 billion for antioxidants alone.
- A five-fold increase in health spa revenues is attributed to this same group.
- By the year 2004, all 78 million baby boomers will have passed their 40th birthday, an age that traditionally increases the focus on health concerns and the advent of old age.
- Thanks in large part to a boomer population intent on maintaining ' type of cosmetic surgery performed for both men and women. Increasing numbers of both male and female boomers are also undergoing hair transplants.

## The Role of Chiropractic

Chiropractic physicians can make an important contribution to the field of anti-aging medicine, as they are often the first health care professional a patient will visit with early signs of aging. How many patients hobble into a chiropractor's office complaining of stiff arthritic joints or aching backs? They worry about these painful effects of aging, and they want our help.

The evolution into anti-aging medicine is logical for chiropractors. Many of my sports medicine patients are getting older now and are shying away from the aggressive sports they enjoyed in their youth. As a result, I see fewer sports injuries than before, but these same patients still come to me to treat the aches and pains of aging and to ask my advice about nutrition and lifestyle changes.

Most patients recognize that chiropractic care is based on a holistic approach, and many chiropractic physicians already provide patients with nutritional and exercise recommendations. So the shift into anti-aging medicine is natural.

But it is complex. Anti-aging medicine is skyrocketing, and chiropractic physicians need specific training in this multi-faceted field. A chiropractic anti-aging certification program is currently being developed jointly by the New York Chiropractic College and A4M. It follows a certification program for medical doctors that was recently instituted by A4M.

The future is now. Anti-aging medicine is a new field, but it promises to be one of the most significant medical specialties of the future.

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