

Fear of Adjusting a Pregnant Woman

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There have been many doctors in the chiropractic profession questioning whether it is "safe" to adjust a pregnant woman. In the last 10 years the fear seems to be subsiding, but still the majority of DCs believe that a chiropractic adjustment may be dangerous to the pregnant patient. I hope this article will alleviate some fears, and instead reinstate the chiropractic philosophy and show why chiropractic is necessary to these patients.

Pregnancy should be a wonderful time for women, a time when they are supposed to feel good and really be able to enjoy the 40 weeks carrying their baby. Unfortunately with our lifestyles and the ways our society has evolved, most women do not have the luxury of staying home. A large percentage of women have careers and find themselves working during their pregnancies. This type of stress on the woman really paves the way to a long list of discomforts associated with pregnancy: morning sickness; fatigue; low back pain; sciatica; headaches; neck pain; rib pain; and the list goes on.

It was not until I participated in the "baby fairs" 10 years ago that I realized that many women felt alone in their pregnancies, with no one to help them. When their obstetricians are told of these various discomforts, the answer was usually, "This is 'normal' in pregnancy. You'll have to wait for it to subside or until the baby is born to be relieved of it." When most of the women who came to my booth reported the same story, I began to take a closer look into pregnancy, and what might be done for these women in pain. The answer of course was chiropractic.

My experience is that chiropractic is safe and effective during pregnancy. With over 10 years of clinical experience working side-by-side with midwives at a birthing and wellness center treating thousands of pregnant women, we have seen that regular chiropractic care during pregnancy improves the outcomes of the pregnant woman and the baby. With regular adjustments and proper nutritional care, the result is a healthier placenta which yields healthier babies and faster delivery and recovery times. The real goal of a midwife is to help the mother build a big, beefy, healthy placenta that will have enough reserves available to adequately support the baby with oxygen during labor and delivery. This is a preventive approach and, with the marriage of chiropractic care, prevents rescuing the baby in distress during its difficult journey to be born.

One of the most common complaints in pregnant women is lower back pain. If we trace the nerve supply from the lower back, which in pregnancy is almost always at the sacral level,¹ we can see that the nerves exiting the sacrum travel directly to the uterus.² By restoring proper nerve innervation to the nerves of the sacrum, we improve the function of the part or organ it innervates. This is the basic chiropractic concept. Mom and baby ultimately feel better after the sacrum is returned to proper alignment. Whenever the mother is adjusted, if it is going to make her feel better, the baby she is carrying will receive benefits from the mother's body being in homeostasis. In the clinical setting, working with a midwife when fetal heart tones were taken with a tachycardia presenting, I witnessed in a large number of cases the tachycardia resolved to normal after the mother carrying the baby receives a chiropractic adjustment.

One of the reasons for the fear that is present is that there is a lack of knowledge regarding pregnancy in the chiropractic profession. As a result of not really getting chiropractic management in school, when faced with adjusting a pregnant woman, many doctors feel as though they might "break" the patient, or cause unfavorable effects in the pregnancy. And it is very important that these women do receive chiropractic as the adjustment affects the baby and the mother. Chiropractic is really one of the best choices of treatment available that quickly and successfully relieves the discomforts associated with pregnancy.

For chiropractic physicians to feel more comfortable with caring for pregnant women, it is mandatory that doctors educate themselves by reviewing obstetrics, pregnancy, and the physiological changes involved. There is a "baby boom" going on, and I am sure that every doctor at one time in practice has had a pregnant patient seek relief with chiropractic. Take seminars, read, and ask your colleagues for help. Adjusting the pregnant patient will cause the growth of a family type of practice, and bring a new generation to chiropractic.

Knowledge about pregnancy is important. We as chiropractors can adjust these women and contribute to the birth of a healthy child.

References

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