

Consumer Reports to Recant Stroke Figures

Editorial Staff

Last June when Consumer Reports published their eight-page report on chiropractic ("Chiropractors, Can They Help? Do They Harm?"), one statement in particular caught the attention of the chiropractic profession:

"But figures derived from a prominent company providing malpractice insurance to U.S. chiropractors suggest how misleading it can be to rely on published case reports. In 1990 alone, the company paid approximately 140 claims to patients who had suffered a stroke after spinal manipulation."

Where did these figures derive from? Who was the "prominent company"? Everyone assumed it was the National Chiropractic Mutual Insurance Company (NCMIC). But after reviewing NCMIC's files, it was discovered that although they insure about half of the profession, they only paid 20 claims in 1990 to patients who had suffered a stroke after manipulation.

Enter one tenacious chiropractor: William J. Lauretti, DC, of Bethesda, Maryland. After nearly five months of sending letters to author Rochelle Green and others on the staff, and making phone calls that contested the 140 figure, Dr. Lauretti finally received the letter that justified his efforts.

Consumer Reports now concedes the 140 figure was inaccurate, and that the information Dr. Lauretti was supplying was accurate: that out of 80,000,000 neck adjustments, there are approximately 40 stroke cases. This translates to one in 2,000,000. Consumer Reports plans a correction in the letter section of the March 1995 issue.

Unfortunately, very few people will see the correction and understand its relevance to the original article nine months ago. The damage has been done. It seems that it can be truly misleading to rely on figures from Consumer Reports.

We thought you'd be interested in reading the letter that Dr. Lauretti received from Consumer Reports.

January 25, 1995
William J. Lauretti, DC
4825 Bethesda Avenue
Suite 310
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Dr. Lauretti,

Please accept my personal apology for the frustration you have experienced in bringing a clarification to our attention. We have not been ignoring you; we have, in fact, been reviewing our sources to see whether our citation of insurance statistics could have been in error. The volume of inquiries we received on our June 1994 article on chiropractic made it difficult for us to respond to your inquiry, and some others, as quickly as we would have liked to.

Nevertheless, we do try to clear up such issues rapidly, and I apologize again for the delay in your case.

We have now determined that the number of stroke cases following manipulation, while significant, is not as great as we had stated. We have learned from the National Chiropractic Mutual Insurance Company that in 1990 the company paid a total of 272 claims, 20 of which were for CVA (stroke) -- a number that matches your calculations. As these figures differ from the information given in our article, we plan to publish a correction in the next issue that ships to press.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Sincerely,

Joel Gurin

Editorial Director

cc: Rhoda H. Karpatkin

David Ansley

Rochelle Green

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