

## Chiropractic -- A Medical Doctor's Perspective

David Perlmutter, MD

Recently I wrote an article for the Naples Daily News, "Chiropractic Medicine -- Effective Alternative for Pain, Studies Show." The response that followed was surprising.

Predictably, I received several complimentary letters and phone calls from chiropractors in the community. On the other hand, my physician colleagues were obviously less than pleased with my portrayal of chiropractors as being conscientious and effective health care practitioners.

It is our duty as health care providers to give our patients the very best care available. If a physician is unable to provide a modality which may be effective in the treatment of a medical problem, then, without question, the patient should be referred to someone who may be able to offer this type of treatment. Clearly, "If your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail." This is why I frequently refer patients to chiropractors as well as acupuncturists, massage therapists, osteopaths, or to any one I feel may have something to offer my patient.

In researching chiropractic, I was pleased to learn that chiropractors receive a considerable amount of training in nutrition during their six years of chiropractic education. This contrasts significantly with medical school. It is estimated that only one-fifth of the medical schools in this country require courses in nutrition. What this seems to indicate is by encouraging an understanding of nutrition, chiropractic is more attuned with disease prevention rather than simply disease treatment.

As a neurologist and medical director of a physical rehabilitation facility, a large part of my practice deals with various syndromes. Some patients do well with straightforward medical treatment, using non-steroid, anti-inflammatory medications, etc. Other patients seem to do well after a course of physical therapy involving both active and passive modalities. Frequently, I refer patients for chiropractic evaluation and treatment and more often than not I am gratified by the response that my patients get.

Perhaps this article should have been published in a medical doctor's journal as opposed to "DC." In my experience, chiropractors have always known when it was appropriate to obtain consultation on a patient from another specialty. Medical doctors, however, have always seemed unlikely to refer patients to chiropractors, and this is not only unfortunate but also unfair since it deprives patients of a potentially useful modality.

There is no one discipline that has a corner on the market of techniques useful in patient care. No one discipline has all the tools. Hopefully, with time my medical colleagues will learn to concentrate on the ultimate goal of providing patients with the best chance of feeling better and realize that chiropractic has a lot to offer.

*David Perlmutter, M.D.  
Naples, Florida*

