

Your Attention, Please!

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Each patient education article in "The Evidence-Based Educator" details research documented in *Somatovisceral Aspects of Chiropractic: An Evidence-Based Approach*, co-edited by Dr. Masarsky and Marion Todres-Masarsky, DC.

Too often, our patients fall into an almost digital (on-off) concept of health. Either you are diseased or well; pathological or perfect. Therefore, when a study comes out correlating subluxation with some disease or syndrome, it is easy for the average patient to dismiss it as irrelevant to his or her life.

In reality, health exists on a continuum, from optimal wellness to death. A disease or syndrome that affects a relatively small number of people may be an extreme expression of a subtler physiological disturbance that affects many people. In this article, the bioclinical literature on learning disabilities is presented in a way that makes it relevant to the patient who is not learning-disabled. Please feel free to use this information for your lay lectures, tableside talks, or bulletin board display.

"I'm happy for Jim, but I sure could have used that promotion myself. I wish I had his ability to concentrate on the details."

"I can't believe I dropped that ball. My mind must have wandered."

"I never even noticed the other car; I guess I had my mind on other things."

"That term paper is already overdue, but I just can't seem to focus."

These four statements relate to markedly different aspects of life: business, sports, driving and school. What ties them together is the importance of attention. The ability to focus one's attention is an obvious component of business success, athletic performance, road safety, and academic achievement.

While deficits in attention can be harmful in all aspects of life, the problem has been most intensively studied in the realm of learning disabilities. Almost everyone has heard the term "attention deficit disorder" (ADD). A number of recent studies suggest that chiropractic care can make a significant contribution in this area.

A group of seven children with ADD were studied over a summer vacation.¹ For a period of time, they were given "placebo" chiropractic adjustments, in which an adjusting instrument was made to "click" while on the spine, but no force was actually introduced into the spinal joints. After this placebo period, the children were given real chiropractic adjustments to correct misalignments or restrictions (subluxations) in the spine. Improvement in attention quality was noticed after real adjustments were initiated, based on parents' observations and childrens' activity levels measured during simulated homework assignments.

In addition to this small experimental study, a number of case reports in the chiropractic literature further support the idea that chiropractic corrections of subluxation can improve neurological function, and thereby improve attention.²

While these studies on chiropractic care for children with attention deficit disorder are promising, it should be pointed out that attention is not "digital." You don't have either attention deficit disorder or laser-like focus. There is a whole lot of territory in between those two extremes. Along these lines, an adult with no diagnosed disorder, but simple "poor concentration" was adjusted, with pre- and post-adjustment assessment of his brain function by computerized EEG (a technique known as "brain mapping").³ The patient reported improved concentration after the adjustment, and his EEG results also indicated improved brain function.

A growing body of evidence indicates that subluxation may interfere with attention, whether this takes the form of full-blown attention deficit disorder, or a more commonplace mental "fogginess." While it may be a number of years before researchers know how widespread this effect of subluxation is, you can take advantage of this data right now. Do you feel more alert after a chiropractic adjustment? Do you tend to feel mentally foggy if it has been a long time since your last visit? If so, you might consider a chiropractic check-up before an important school examination, an intense athletic event, a vital business meeting, a long drive, or any other challenge to your ability to concentrate.

References

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