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NEWS / PROFESSION

## **Going Global With Spinal Health**

WORLD SPINE DAY/NATIONAL SPINAL HEALTH DAY IS OCT. 16

Ron Kirk, DC; Stephen Simonetti, DC

Remember it. Plan for it. Why, you ask? What's so special about that day? Oct. 16, 2006 is the day the chiropractic profession and Straighten Up America celebrate World Spine Day/National Spinal Health Day in collaboration with the United States Bone and Joint Decade.

Several years ago, the International Bone and Joint Decade initiated World Spine Day to call attention to the burden of spinal disability and promote better spinal health habits during the Decade's National Action Week. This year, World Spine Day in the U.S. features "Straighten Up America" as its theme. On Oct. 16, doctors of chiropractic have the unique opportunity to serve the public on the front lines of spinal health promotion and wellness in collaboration with the Bone and Joint Decade.



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We strongly encourage doctors to get involved in public outreach educational events to empower their communities. We will be teaching patients, schoolchildren, civic organizations, corporations, faith congregations and others simple, enjoyable exercises and active healthy lifestyle recommendations to improve their spinal health. We also will conduct a World Spine Day/National Spinal Health Day kickoff event/outreach in Washington, D.C., on the same day.

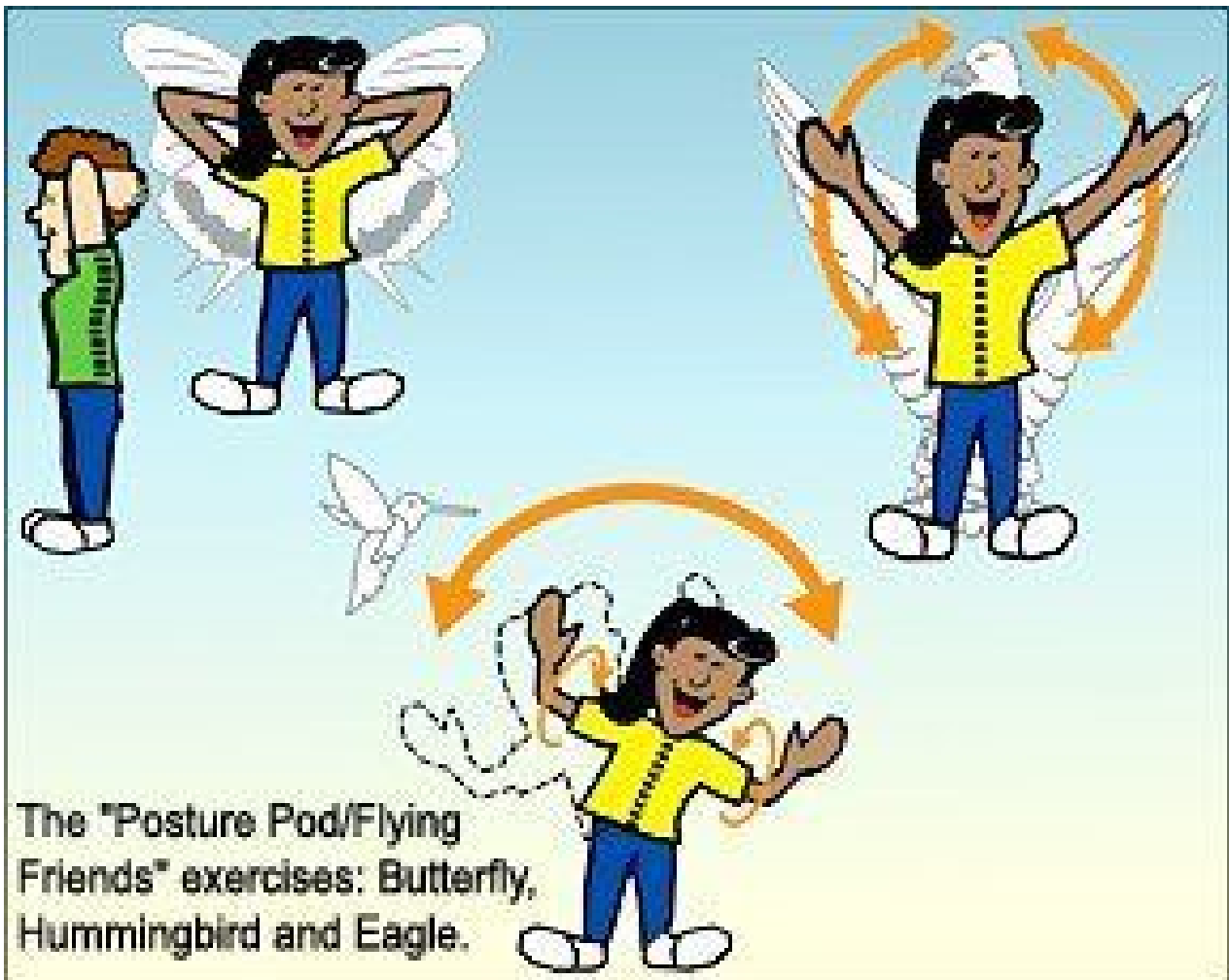
We have structured our national launch along the lines of the highly successful kickoff of "Straighten Up Australia" this past May, with both national and local outreaches. Our efforts in America are bolstered by the added benefit of collaboration with the Bone and Joint Decade.

Adding further cultural authority to our efforts, Straighten Up America is proud to be a "50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Partner to Get America Moving," an initiative of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports during its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1956-2006).

The Congress of Chiropractic State Associations and Life University are currently finalizing implementation kits to enable doctors to teach their patients and their communities "Straighten Up" exercises and healthy lifestyle recommendations on World Spine Day/National Spinal Health Day. The great news is that "Straighten Up" is a natural fit for nationally mandated wellness programs, designed to increase students' activity and fitness levels in schools across the nation. Schools are currently searching for activity-based programs to combat obesity and its associated health risks.

Though still in its infancy as a health initiative, "Straighten Up" has garnered a number of accolades from health and fitness leaders, including Lee Haney, past chairman of the U.S. President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Lee describes the program as "awesome," with "vision and much promise." In January 2005, Tommy Thompson, then-U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, "commended" the individuals who developed "Straighten Up" for their "leadership in the field of spinal health."

"Straighten Up" is endorsed by the Congress of Chiropractic Organizations, the presidents of ACC chiropractic colleges and the World Federation of Chiropractic. The initiative has received financial support from the American Chiropractic Association, the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners and a number of state chiropractic organizations and individual doctors. "Straighten Up" also has received participatory support from the International Chiropractors Association and many other chiropractic organizations.



Our hope is that children around the world will practice these beneficial spinal health habits. Dr. Jose Carlos Martines, coordinator of the Child and Adolescent Health and Development Cluster of the World Health Organization (WHO), shares this hope and helped to shape the program as a Delphi panel member. We are currently creating multiple language translations of "Straighten Up" to begin global implementation and habituation in collaboration with the WHO.

To date, "Straighten Up" has received excellent reviews in every venue in which it has been presented. Some of these venues include the U.S. House of Representatives Wellness Center; the U.S. Bone and Joint Decade Meeting at the National Institutes of Health; the American Public Health Association annual meeting; and the Healthier US Fitness Festival.

Through presentations, endorsements and collaborative efforts, the initiative has gathered positive momentum very rapidly. It provides a perfect format for patient and community education in spinal health promotion and wellness.

#### How to Get Started

Here are some simple steps to start preparing to celebrate World Spine Day/National Spinal Health

Day:

1. Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the "Straighten Up" exercise module and lifestyle recommendations.
2. Begin to practice the "Straighten Up" activities and lifestyle recommendations daily in order to improve spinal health, posture and core stabilization. Make sure the activities are appropriate for you and not contraindicated by disorders which prohibit exercise and movement of your spinal column and related joints. If you experience sharp or shooting pain while exercising, stop the activity and consult with your doctor.)
3. We recommend beginning with the "Posture Pod/Flying Friends" exercises. (Please refer to illustrations accompanying this article.) Perform these exercises in front of a mirror before or after you brush your teeth. The Posture Pod is fun and only takes about 30 seconds to complete. You should feel refreshed and will improve your appearance and self image through consistent performance. The Eagle, Hummingbird and Butterfly are simple and immediately invigorating. "Straighten Up" mirror decals will help you promote habitual performance.
4. Once you are comfortable with the exercises, you may begin to share them with others. Doctors will educate and motivate their patients and their communities (including schools, corporations, faith congregations and civic organizations) to improve their spinal health through consistent practice of "Straighten Up." World Spine Day/National Spinal Health Day is a great time to start your community educational outreach at a nearby school, civic organization or corporation. Be sure to always screen individuals carefully to make sure the exercises are appropriate for them, taking particular precautions with individuals who have disorders which limit exercise or activity, and the elderly.

#### Making World Spine Day/National Spinal Health Day Real

We believe there is a very real need for improvement in the area of spinal health promotion and prevention of disability. In the digital information age, most people are working and playing inactively in slouched awkward postures. Spinal disability is increasing in prevalence, even in children and youth. Now is the time for us to take proactive steps to teach others how to "Straighten Up" and lead active healthy lives.

Working together, we can positively impact on our society for generations to come. That is the vision for "Straighten Up." Let's make it real together. It's our vision, our health and our future. It takes all of us. So remember World Spine Day/National Spinal Health Day educational outreaches on Oct. 16. Why not make a difference in your practice and your community in collaboration with the U.S. Bone and Joint Decade?

Further instructions and more educational materials for getting started with "Straighten Up" and World Spine Day/National Spinal Health Day are available at [www.life.edu](http://www.life.edu) and [www.cocsa.org](http://www.cocsa.org) or <http://media.sevensides.com>. Complete implementation kits will be available soon.

For more information about "Straighten Up," please contact Ron Kirk at 770-426-2709, [rkirk@life.edu](mailto:rkirk@life.edu) or Janet Jordan at 803-356-6809, [cocsa@sc.rr.com](mailto:cocsa@sc.rr.com).

*Sincerely,*

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JULY 2006

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