

Pain Relief: Safe Behind the Wheel

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Author's Note: Auto accidents, slip-and-fall injuries, sports injuries and work-related trauma are all a part of daily life. The risk of these injuries increases with "attention" disorders. The following patient-education piece makes this clear and compares the relative impact of chiropractic and drugs on attention. Please feel free to use it as a front-desk flyer, in your patient newsletters or as a handout for lay lectures.

It's generally considered self-evident that misalignments and restrictions (subluxations) in the spine can cause back and neck pain. What is not widely known is that some clinical evidence suggests that subluxations also may contribute to long-lasting disturbances in mental concentration.

Recently, an Australian-American chiropractic team published a paper discussing the case of a 6-year-old boy who struck his head in a fall from a playground slide.¹ The impact of the fall knocked the boy unconscious. Eighteen months later, the mother brought the boy to a doctor of chiropractic. Even though she did not "believe in chiropractic care," she was "at her wit's end" due to her inability to alleviate her son's headaches and neck pain with painkillers.

In addition to these main complaints, a careful history revealed the boy also was suffering from stomach pains and frequent bloodshot eyes. He also was unable to sit still and had poor grades in school, and his teacher complained of disruptive and inattentive behavior in class. These behavioral symptoms are typical of a profound disturbance in mental concentration such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). All of these pains, eye irritation and ADHD symptoms made their first appearance after the fall from the slide.

After three weeks of chiropractic care, the boy's grades improved quite a bit. For example, scores of 20 percent were typical on spelling tests just before the start of chiropractic care. After three weeks of care (which consisted of three adjustments for the correction of subluxation), he received a score of 80 percent, along with a vast improvement in penmanship. After two months of care, steady improvement in academic performance and behavior were noted by both his school and his parents, his eyes were consistently clear, his stomach pains had abated, and his neck pain and headaches were much relieved. At nine months, the boy was continuing to do well with monthly chiropractic check ups.

The combination of ADHD with neck pain, headache and other musculoskeletal pains is not unique to the case reviewed above. In fact, ADHD frequently makes its first appearance following a fall or accident. This pattern commonly is encountered in the small but growing body of literature indicating that chiropractic care can be helpful for patients with attention-deficit problems.^{2,3} Apparently, the same trauma-related subluxations that create musculoskeletal pain also may trigger or aggravate ADHD.

Interestingly, there is evidence finding ADHD to be a significant risk factor for future car crashes,

falls and other accidents.⁴ Hypothetically, this could set up a vicious cycle in which disturbed concentration leads to future accidents, generating new subluxations, leading to new musculoskeletal pains and additional attention deficits. If this proves to be the case, chiropractic care may prevent future accidents by preventing loss of mental focus.

While the role of chiropractic care in preventing ADHD-related accidents remains hypothetical at this time, consider the effects of some of the drugs often used instead of chiropractic care to relieve neck pain, back pain and headaches. Some of the more powerful analgesics (such as Fiorinol, Percocet and Vicodin) and all of the muscle relaxants can cause drowsiness and sedation. In fact, the labels on these products usually carry warnings against driving or operating machinery while under the influence of the drug.⁵

Dealing with your aches and pains the natural chiropractic way may bring improved mental concentration and other benefits for your nervous system. Unlike those who take certain drugs for pain relief, chiropractic patients are safe behind the wheel.

References

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