

## Treating TMD With Chiropractic: Here Comes the Research

Editorial Staff

With researchers at the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research at [Palmer College of Chiropractic](#) already hard at work on several research projects, including the recently reported study investigating whether a specialized chiropractic adjustment can help reduce blood pressure in hypertensive patients, the center is taking on another major project, this one a study that will explore the feasibility of chiropractic care for treatment of temporomandibular disorders (TMD). Palmer researchers are working in collaboration with the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Institute for Clinical and Translational Sciences on the project, one of three research investigations being funded courtesy of the \$2.8 million grant awarded to the Palmer Center in 2008 by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, a branch of the NIH.

Eighty study participants will be enrolled and randomized to receive one of four treatment strategies: Activator-delivered adjustments to precise areas of the head and neck, along with an intensive self-care program for TMD management; a conventional dental splint used for TMD management and the self-care program; placebo and self-care; or the self-care program alone. All patients will receive treatment for two months and be tracked for an additional four-month follow-up period to gauge treatment effectiveness.

"The concept that manipulation of the upper cervical spine ... can reduce head and neck pain and reduce the potential need for prescription pain medications and improve quality of life are very important issues to understand," said Dr. Clark Stanford of the University of Iowa, who serves as co-leader of the study along with the Palmer Center's Dr. James DeVocht. "A novel feature of this study design is that the effects of each form of treatment will be evaluated in a masked or blinded fashion. This unique research design allows us to use the expert clinicians for each TMD method and therefore gives us the best chance to understand differences in efficacy of response to this innovative chiropractic method."

Explaining why it is so important to find [reliable treatments for TMD](#), Dr. DeVocht added: "More than 10 million Americans suffer from head and neck pain related to TMD, with a lifetime prevalence of 45 percent and a direct care cost of \$2 billion. This makes it one of the most common forms of chronic debilitating pain in the United States. Although many medical and dental treatments for TMD are available, few if any have shown any sustained efficacy."

FEBRUARY 2010