

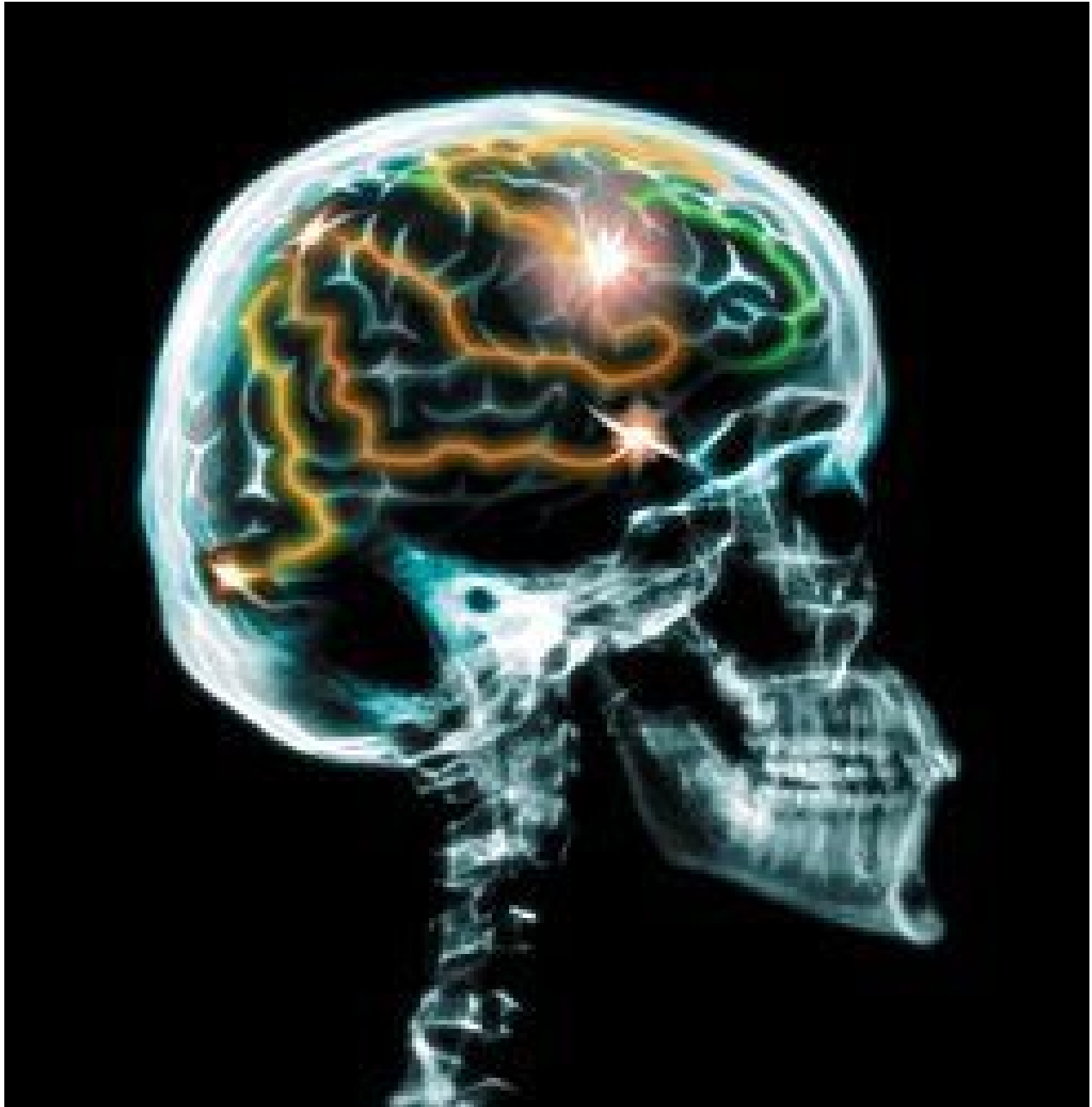
## New Certification Program in Neurodevelopmental Disorders Launched

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Over the past 15 years, the population of children with neurodevelopmental disorders has grown; one of the leaders in recognizing this is Dr. Monika Buerger, who has dedicated the majority of her professional career to the pursuit of understanding this disorder and integrating chiropractic with other disciplines in an effort to better serve patients. Further, Dr. Buerger has just completed two chapters, Sensory Processing Disorders and Neurodevelopmental Disorders, for the second edition of the *Pediatric Chiropractic* textbook due to be released spring 2011.

As co-editor of this textbook, I was excited to hear that Dr. Buerger had just launched an advanced 100-hour certification program addressing complementary alternative medical options for children with neurodevelopmental disorders. I decided to interview Dr. Buerger and several members of her teaching team, Maureen McDonnell, RN, and Elizabeth Mumper, MD, to better understand the development and mission of the certification program, which integrates neurology, nutrition, exercise and chiropractic.

*Dr. Buerger, how did this 100-hour certification program evolve?* I have been teaching a course on Neurosensory Integration Dysfunction for the [International Chiropractic Pediatric Association](#) (ICPA) going on six years now. This course covers introductory theory, principles, and the important role that chiropractic care plays in the management of this particular population group. It also covers some specific beginning-level exercises and techniques to incorporate into one's practice. I think that because the subject matter is so intriguing and pertinent to the chiropractic profession, once a person is introduced, they crave more information. After every class I presented to, I would get several requests for more advanced classes. So, I began to offer an advanced neurosensory course, which I started in early 2010.



This year, I was saddened to hear that the program [Defeat Autism Now! \(DAN!\)](#) had begun limiting chiropractic participation in the program, and I received many phone calls and e-mails regarding the possibility of offering a biomedical course specific to chiropractors serving children with neurodevelopmental disorders. This need within the profession brought me to an introduction to fellow professionals who were interested in bringing their expertise to our profession.

*Would you share with us your teaching team and their field of expertise?* I'm proud to introduce to our profession three exceptional individuals who are experts in their [respective] fields: Maureen McDonnell, RN, is the former national coordinator of the DAN! conferences; Dr. Elizabeth Mumper, MD, is the former medical director of the [Autism Research Institute](#); and Judy Rosevear-Pusey, MS,OTR/L, is an occupational therapist who specializes in caring for children who have neurodevelopmental disorders.

*Maureen, you have worked with many professionals in the field of neurodevelopmental disorders; what have your challenges been and how is this new chiropractic program going to benefit from your experience?* When I coordinated the Defeat Autism Now! conferences, the biggest challenge

we had in the early years was researchers and clinicians alike presenting a plethora of theories as to what was going on metabolically with the children on the autism spectrum. This was all very exciting, but very few practical tips were offered to the many practitioners who attended these meetings.

After one conference in Portland, Ore., in 2003, Jane El-Dahr, MD (the head of pediatric allergy and immunology at Tulane Medical Center in New Orleans), pointed out the fact that we were not arming the physicians with enough of the "nuts and bolts" of how to implement the biomedical model into their practices; there wasn't enough of "what to do on Monday morning." After that, DAN! began offering a clinician training seminar, which has gone on to help hundreds of physicians learn the practical steps necessary to address the many [metabolic disturbances](#) present in children on the autism spectrum.

Now a similar program has been developed specifically for chiropractors. The program combines the best of the *natural* biomedical approach for treating children with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders with chiropractic techniques and philosophy. The 100-hour program will provide mentorship and certification for chiropractors who would like to expand their knowledge, using current research and practical tools necessary to improve (and in some instances recover) children affected by autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders.

*Dr. Mumper, what role can chiropractors play in helping heal a generation of children affected by autism, attention and learning challenges, and emotional challenges?* Chiropractors are very skilled at developing effective therapeutic relationships with their patients and motivating them to make changes in their lifestyles. Chiropractors have the potential to work with pediatric patients in the following therapeutic ways: 1) hands-on touch and adjustments which, in addition to whatever chiropractic goals the clinician is attempting to achieve, have the potential to help the child learn to tolerate physical contact from others; 2) counseling parents about the importance of choosing food not just for [calories](#), but thinking of food as information that tells the child's cells how to carry out important biologic functions; 3) teaching children and parents the value of movement and exercise; and 4) enhancing the therapeutic alliance between the child and the extended family.

*Dr. Buerger, what is so unique about this program?* The goal of this entire program is to bring *practical and useful* information to doctors who are committed to making life-changing improvements for those suffering from a neurodevelopmental condition. All four of the presenters in this program are still currently in practice and bring years of clinical experience. Aside from keeping up on the latest research, we work day in and day out "in the trenches" with these types of cases. I believe that kind of knowledge and experience is invaluable in helping chiropractors know how to work with these particular patients.

*What can one expect to achieve by taking this program?* It is estimated that one in six children in this country has some type of neurodevelopmental disorder. That number is staggering and is only expected to rise unless we start educating others and start doing (in mass) what we know to be effective for this population group. As chiropractors, especially those with a family-based practice, we are beginning to see more and more of these children in our offices, and the presenting cases are children with much lower function than in previous decades.

Over the years, I have received numerous phone calls and e-mails asking how to even begin to start working with the autistic child; you know, the one who runs around the office screaming, kicking, hitting, and biting anyone who tries to put their hands on them. These cases are not made up; they are real and they are presenting to us on a more frequent basis. Even if they have the skills, I believe that the biggest component most doctors lack is confidence in how to deal with such a complex population group. This comprehensive program and its unique "internship" component

will give those taking the program the confidence and skills to manage a wide variety of cases, from the easiest to the most challenging.

*Does a person have to take the entire program or can they just take certain modules?* No, they can select any modules they are interested in. However, to receive the certification that is granted through the [Academy of Chiropractic Family Practice](#), they will need to complete the entire program.

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For more information on the 100-hour certification program in neurodevelopmental disorders, which is endorsed by the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association (advanced modules may be taken by diplomates to fulfill their post-study requirements) and co-sponsored by Northwestern Health Sciences University, visit [www.intersect4kids.com](http://www.intersect4kids.com).

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