

Call for Rational Chiropractic

A recent survey reported in *Dynamic Chiropractic*² states that 54% of chiropractic physicians incorporate homeopathy into their practices, and 44% use megavitamin supplements. The 1991 National Board of Chiropractic Examiners survey found that 37% use applied kinesiology.

The current literature suggests that spinal manipulation, the main procedure utilized by chiropractic physicians, is not only safe, but effective for many musculoskeletal conditions. Its validity for treatment of these conditions is well established, yet many of the techniques used in some chiropractic offices remain controversial.

Applied Kinesiology

Applied kinesiology (AK) is a system of muscle testing and therapy based on assertions that specific muscle weaknesses are signs of internal organ problems or nutritional deficiencies. Some practitioners claim that AK techniques can also be used to evaluate nerve, vascular, lymphatic and cerebrospinal systems.

Researchers have subjected applied kinesiology to several well designed tests and demonstrated no difference between AK and placebos. One study found that the diagnosis of nutritional deficiencies did not correspond to blood serum analysis.⁴ A review of 20 published research papers by the International College of Applied Kinesiology concluded that because "none of the papers included adequate statistical analysis, no valid conclusions could be drawn from their findings."⁵ A well-designed double-blind study concluded that "muscle response appeared to be a random phenomenon."³

Vitamin Supplements

According to *Your Guide to Good Nutrition*,¹ people actually need to take vitamin supplements, and the best way to ensure optimal health is to eat a well-balanced diet. Vitamins can be useful in the treatment of certain diseases; however, if you are healthy and eat a balanced diet, all the vitamins you need will be available from food. Vitamin C has been given value in preventing diseases such as the common cold, yet 16 well-designed double-blind studies have found no preventive effect.¹

Additionally, prolonged intake of vitamin supplements can cause a long list of adverse side effects.¹ Excessive intake of vitamin A can cause serious eye problems, increased brain pressure and abnormal bone growth. Excessive vitamin C can cause gout and kidney stones. Excessive vitamin D can cause headache, kidney damage, high blood pressure and elevated blood cholesterol. Excessive vitamin B6 can be toxic to the nervous system, causing numbness, tingling and symptoms resembling multiple sclerosis.

Homeopathy

Homeopathy is based upon the unfounded idea that decreasing the dose of a substance increases the physiological response to it. Practitioners claim that the dose may be decreased to the point where the substance is no longer present, but the solvent in which the substance was once present will remain potent.

Homeopathy is often mistakenly associated with herbal medicine. This shows a lack of understanding, since herbal medicine is the application of diluted substances found in plant drugs (herbs) for the purpose of prevention and treatment of disease.⁶ According to Varro Tyler, PhD, ScD, dean of Purdue University School of Pharmacy and Pharmacal Science for 20 years, "There is no reliable scientific or clinical evidence that confirms the validity of homeopathy."⁶

Conclusions

In spite of the absence of scientific proof regarding the validity of these procedures, there still remains widespread utilization among some chiropractic physicians who have well intentions, but in my opinion, such continued use perpetuates the myth that the chiropractic profession is pseudoscience. I hope the readers of this article will see the shortcomings of our profession, which can be painful but are necessary if we are to continue evolving.

Human nature often is to resist change, yet I believe the chiropractic profession as a whole will some day perceive these procedures much the same way we look at the medical profession using leaches today. Rational chiropractic based upon scientific methodology is the first step towards helping ensure the procedures implemented in our practices are safe and effective.

References

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