Dynamic Chiropractic

BACK PAIN

"Wind" and the Power of Chiropractic

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Author's Note: Each patient education article in this column is written for your current and potential patients. Please feel free to post it on your bulletin board, reference it in lay lectures and reprint it in your practice newsletter.

The ability to take a comfortable, deep breath affects many aspects of life. For an athlete, it almost goes without saying that loss of "wind" can mean the difference between victory and defeat in competition. For a singer or a player of a wind instrument, difficult breathing can noticeably mar a musical performance. For a politician, trial lawyer, business leader, public speaker, teacher or sales rep, weak breathing can produce a weak voice, and a weak voice can inadvertently convey a weak message.

A small Australian study found that full, deep breathing and spinal mobility may be closely related.[1] A group of young adults with no known respiratory diseases received manipulation to mobilize all of the spinal joints from the lower neck to the middle back. Lung volumes were recorded by having the volunteers blow into a device called a "spirometer." This was done one minute before and one minute after the manipulation. There was significant improvement in lung volumes after manipulation.

Interestingly, another group demonstrated a temporary decrease in lung volumes after treadmill exercise. This probably resulted from a transient increase in the resistance of the breathing pathways in response to the stress of exercise. Even more interesting was that the third group of volunteers who received both treadmill exercise and manipulation had improved lung volumes after manipulation followed by even better volumes after treadmill exercise. Apparently, spinal manipulation not only made breathing easier, but also mitigated the short-term respiratory stress of exercise.

The findings of the Australian study are consistent with previous research indicating that spinal joint misalignment or restriction (subluxation) can disturb breathing.[2] This body of research also indicates that correcting subluxation with chiropractic adjustment often results in improved breathing. Furthermore, this research is consistent with the informal observations of generations of doctors of chiropractic. After an adjustment, it is not at all uncommon for our patients to remark that they can take a full deep breath for the first time in days (or weeks, or months).

As in all fields, research must continue. However, these preliminary results indicate that people seeking relief from neck pain, back pain and headache through chiropractic care may experience a benefit not delivered by pain pills - improved "wind."

References

1. Engel RM, Vemulpad S. The effect of combining manual therapy with exercise on the respiratory

function of normal individuals: a randomized control trial. *JMPT*, 2007;30:509-13.
2. Masarsky CS, Todres-Masarsky M. Breathing and the vertebral subluxation complex. In: Masarsky CS, Todres-Masarsky M, Eds. *Somatovisceral Aspects of Chiropractic: An Evidence-Based Approach*. New York: Churchill Livingstone, 2001.

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