

Chiropractic Health Care Without Drugs

*Despite intense attacks from the medical establishment
chiropractors are more popular than anytime in history*

By Gary Null
and Kalev Pehme

Chiropractic is coming of age. This eighty-five-year-old art of physical manipulation is fast becoming the most important in the nation. The chiropractic method of physical adjustment uses no drugs. It relies instead on the body's ability to heal itself. According to Louis Gearhart, executive director of the American Chiropractic Association, the clinical success rate achieved by the group's 14,000 members convinced millions of Americans to visit a chiropractor in 1979.

Why call such a hugely popular form of treatment an "alternative" method of health care? One reason has been the constant anti-chiropractic lobbying of the American Medical Association, which has in the past denounced chiropractic as unscientific, reflecting the view of many establishment physicians who considered it quackery. Even chiropractic's most vehement critics admit, however, that the number of people turning to chiropractic to stay healthy is rising dramatically. This is one form of "alternative" health care that's enjoying a great (and well-deserved) increase in public acceptance.

Manipulation And How It Works

The founder and pioneers of modern-day chiropractic rediscovered a technique, older than Hippocrates, of physical adjustments which can relieve bodily discomfort, pain and disease. Consider first a non-chiropractic example: A woman in labor often suffers intense lower



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back pain from the severe pressure the emerging fetus exerts against the spine. The pain can be relieved by applying counter-pressure against the woman's lower back with a pair of fists. This relief requires no drugs or, for that matter, any medical training whatsoever. In everyday life, we all make a multitude of similar physical adjustments which make us feel better.

What chiropractors have done is systematize hundreds of physical corrections, which, in turn, relieve a host of ailments. "I once thought I'd rather die than go to the chiropractor," says Lucille Valenti Chasin, a health care activist in the New York Health Systems Agency. Ms. Chasin found, however, that a chiropractor was able to ease the pain of her arthritis by manipulating her legs, thus allowing her to walk easily. Her initial doubts, of course, are typical in a society that has been repeatedly warned that chiropractors are dangerous quacks because they manipulate the spine.

Spinal manipulation is at the heart of the controversy over chiropractic. From the earliest theories advanced by founder Daniel David Palmer in 1895, chiropractors maintained that partial dislocations (subluxations) of

the spinal vertebrae and other joints of the body interfere with the nerve parts of the body. The keyboard the nervous system is the spine, because, as chiropractor-author Dr. Julius Dintenfass explains, "the most vital portion of the body is the axis formed by the brain, the spinal cord, and the vertebrae which support the body." Chiropractic theory assumes that the body's communication network—which controls all movements, from blinking the eyelids to throwing a baseball—coordinates the body's more complex functions. If any part of the nervous system is impaired by a partial dislocation, then the parts of the body served by that section of the nervous system are unable to function properly.

The chiropractor restores the nerve impulse supply by adjusting the body, thereby removing any barrier to the nerve impulses. This is done by hand ("chiropractic," in Greek) without drugs or surgery, effectively treating conditions as disparate as explosive migraines, stiffened limbs, low-back pains and even sinus conditions.

The healing power of chiropractic does have limits, however. According to Dr. Dintenfass, "Chiropractic does not treat the following conditions: cancer, coronary disease, diabetes, kidney disease, pneumonia. It doesn't deal with any of the conditions that develop a state of pathology (structural and functional changes caused by disease) which might be irreversible...we refer these cases to a physician." In other words, when the body has deteriorated to the point of crisis, then "crisis" medicine becomes appropriate.

"Chiropractic is based on the theory," says Dr. Alan Pressman, a prominent New York chiropractor and expert nutritionist, "that if there is 'normal' structure, there is going to be 'normal' function." Chiropractic

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theory assumes that the body already has all the necessary tools to combat disease and maintain health. For example, the chiropractor stimulates the body's own recuperative powers to fight allergic asthma, relieving the wheezing and breathing difficulties, without having to resort to prolonged medication. The chiropractor, then, does not actually "cure" anything; instead, he assists nature to heal illness.

These manipulative techniques do require extensive knowledge of the body, of course. Chiropractors now come out of college with as much sophisticated knowledge of the body as a medical student. They study everything from anatomy to lab diagnosis to biochemistry; in fact chiropractors study almost everything in a medical school curriculum except pharmacology and surgery. A properly trained chiropractic-school graduate is capable of making accurate, scientific diagnoses.

Holistic Chiropractic

Even though chiropractic is still in its formative stages, it has expanded beyond the exclusive manipulation of the spine to many other physical corrections, including manipulation of the feet and knees. The major recent advance in chiropractic care, however, concerns holistic techniques. An estimated two-thirds of the 25,000 chiropractors in the United States have gone beyond strict chiropractic procedures to include an understanding of the body's total structure and its interrelationships with other physical activities and the environment. For example, many chiropractors are emphasizing proper nutrition to keep patients healthy, while also stressing proper exercise and posture to keep the body in its best shape. These chiropractors—the vast majority—are often known as "Mixers". They not only diagnose and treat problems with chiropractic procedures, but support their chiropractic work with other treatments and techniques designed to enhance total well-being.

But not all chiropractors are mixers. Many, known as "straights," confine their practice solely to chiropractic procedures. Neither side regards the other as heretical, however, because both sides agree that chiropractic procedures are their primary healing

tools.

Both straights and mixers, however, provide a form of health maintenance that is not provided by allopathic (crisis-oriented) medicine, even though the nation's health bill has now risen to a staggering \$200 billion per year.

This expansion of the health care industry has been accompanied by an overall decline in public health, especially from degeneration diseases such as cancer. This is because the existing medical establishment is mainly geared to fight disease only after a patient's health deteriorates.

Chiropractors continually challenge such allopathic attitudes. As Dr. Dintenfass explains, "The advance in medicine has been in technology." For example, he cites the remarkable advances made by surgeons in transplanting organs and reattaching severed limbs. "But basically this is not healing," Dintenfass continues. "Healing should prevent disease from progressing to the point where you have to transplant an organ." Chiropractic differs because it offers health care designed to keep patients healthy and whole, not to cope after-the-fact, as a doctor does.

Chiropractic differs from allopathic medicine in yet another, most welcome way: it's cheaper. An initial visit to a chiropractor can cost from fifteen to thirty dollars, a savings of one-third to one-half over the thirty to

seventy-five dollar range of fees charged by traditional doctors. Follow-up visits to the chiropractor save even more, generally costing only ten to fifteen dollars.

The big bargain chiropractic offers, however, is inherent in its very nature. Chiropractic care is designed to keep patients healthy, not to treat symptoms of disease after they appear. As a result, chiropractors keep patients out of the hospital—the most expensive link in the medical establishment's health care chain.

The Critics

Despite chiropractic's unique approach to health care, however, many traditional doctors see chiropractic as a threat to their profession. We talked to one anti-chiropractic psychiatrist who claimed to be the world's leading authority on chiropractic fraud. The doctor, who heads a committee against health fraud, refused to be quoted on the record because of our stand on health care issues. However, his extensive off-the-record "education" on chiropractic outlined traditional medicine's objections quite well:

- Chiropractic has no scientific basis, and there is no research to prove its validity.
- There has been no research into chiropractic because chiropractors themselves fear exposure of their "rackets." Additionally, chiropractors are themselves so incapable of thinking in scientific terms that they

caveat emptor has long been interested in the issue of the AMA vendetta against the chiropractic profession. As one of America's largest consumer groups we feel that we are entitled to freedom of choice in health care.

Several years ago we had a complete issue on this subject, that was written and researched in conjunction with Gary Null and The Nutrition Institute of America. Since then, requests for reprints have poured in from all over the world. To date we have reprinted over 300,000 copies and are going back to press again.

We have updated the material and added several chapters. This reprint will have 32 pages.

A few of the chapter headings are:

- The Education of a modern

Chiropractor

- The Science and Art of Chiropractic
- Expose of the AMA "Quackery" committee
- AMA charges answered
- The history of AMA persecution of chiropractic

For those of our readers who are interested in this topic we have set aside a number of copies that will be sent at no cost other than that for mailing and handling. If you will send us 30¢ (or two 15¢ stamps) we will send you a copy. Sorry but we can send only one copy per letter. For larger amounts either write us at 17 Freeman Street, West Orange, N.J. 07052 or call Mrs Howard collect at (201) 675-8474.

cannot even write accurate case reports of their patients.

- Chiropractors help some people by relaxing their muscles; however, "subluxations" are a figment of their imaginations.

- Chiropractors delude themselves into thinking they help people, because they believe they are instrumental in their patient's recovery when in fact the patients would have recovered anyway.

- Chiropractors are entrepreneurs who attempt to make their patients totally dependent on them in order to make money.

- Holistic healing methods are yet other "quackeries" used by chiropractors to support their primary "scam".

- Essentially, chiropractic is an "unscientific cult."

This adversary is presently waging a guerrillawar against chiropractic in the press, and is often quoted by other opponents. While the above list is far from complete, it does expose the rabid anti-chiropractic thinking some doctors espouse.

The assault on chiropractic has not been limited to a campaign of innuendo, however. In 1963, for example, the American Medical Association, among the largest trade organizations in the United States, with a tradition of having one of the toughest and most effective lobbies in the nation, established a Committee on Quackery, supported by its own Bureau of Investigation. The story of this AMA committee has been vividly described in a highly unusual book by William Trever, titled *in the Public Interest*. The book is essentially a compilation of internal AMA documents purportedly copied by a high AMA official disgusted with organization's alleged war of attrition against chiropractic. Some of the reproduced documents allegedly reveal a comprehensive anti-chiropractic campaign by this august medical body:

- The AMA attempted to discredit chiropractic through subversive propaganda techniques.

- The AMA's committee and intelligence arm secretly sponsored an anti-chiropractic book, which it then disseminated as an

"independent" work.

- The AMA systematically attempted to enlist all state and county medical societies to wage similar warfare against chiropractic.

- The AMA systematically attempted to teach anti-chiropractic attitudes to children throughout the nation's school systems.

The indictment is much longer and complex than outlined here. But in any event, the Committee on Quackery died in May 1975, when the AMA fired seventy staff members, including the entire Bureau of Investigation, in what was termed an economy move. Since then, the AMA has not had an official arm to combat "quackery" (a label the AMA has also given to those involved in alternative health care concerned with nutrition and vitamins).

Ironically, the long-standing AMA prejudice against chiropractic has been totally contradicted by the new official AMA stance, which is highly conciliatory. This may be due in great part to the number of lawsuits alleging anti-trust violations that chiropractors and state agencies have launched against the AMA, facing that organization with a billion dollars of potential damages and expensive litigation over the next few years as well. One precedent-breaking suit, launched by the Attorney General of New York, marks one of the first times a state agency has decided to take on the AMA's political power, especially unusual in a state where establishment medicine constitutes a major portion of the state's power structure.

The official AMA position now states that, "The AMA has never taken a hard line against chiropractic as an alternative form of health care delivery. The AMA has taken a hard line against the over-extension of chiropractic education, training, and licensure into areas where they are ill-equipped to cope without creating hazards to the public, primarily when they attempt to diagnose and treat cancer, heart disease, essential hypertension, stroke, diabetes. We have never felt that there was not a role for chiropractors to play."

The AMA's most telling admission follows: "Everybody is aware of the many satisfied patients who have received manual manipulation from

chiropractors, not only for low-back pain, but for other types of muscular disorders." The AMA now officially objects only to those chiropractors who do not keep within their limitations. As far as the AMA is concerned, chiropractic may eventually become as accepted as podiatry and dentistry, both of which the AMA also fought *fiercely* when these professions emerged. This is truly an amazing olive branch for the AMA to extend, and it presages the medical profession's ultimate acceptance of chiropractic.

Inevitably, chiropractic is becoming a major force of primary health care in the nation, replacing the lost ministrations of general practitioners. In other words, chiropractic may soon be the first level at which medical crises are diagnosed.

If a crisis exists, then the patient can be treated by a physician with drugs, surgery or other medical technology, if necessary. If drastic measures are not called for, then chiropractic and holistic healing can maintain the health of the patient. This system would provide comprehensive health care.

With the growth of the profession through an increasingly sophisticated body of anatomical knowledge, as well as the use of proper environmental and nutritional means to maintain health, the new generation of chiropractors may provide the lead in revolutionizing health care. Dr. Pressman notes, "What I would like to see is the development of a symbiotic relationship between the chiropractor, whose main interest lies in the biomechanics of the body and how it relates to normal function, and the medical practitioner.

"The chiropractic profession has changed dramatically in the twenty years I've been involved in it," Dr. Pressman continues, "and the primary reason for the change is public demand. The public wants an alternative. They've had it up to their ears with medical care that doesn't give them enough preventive advice."

The rapidly growing field of chiropractic seems destined to solve many of the health care problems the traditional medical establishment has help create.