

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Bonnie Verhunce

## Studies Show Chiropractic Most Effective Option for Low-Back Pain

*Did you know that up to 85 percent of adults endure low-back pain (LBP) sometime during their lives? And that many of the medications used to relieve LBP carry hazardous side effects? The good news is that research shows that chiropractic care — a drug-free approach — is the most effective remedy.*

*Why is chiropractic such an effective solution for LBP? Chiropractic eradicates the root cause of low-back pain. Specifically, a common condition called vertebral subluxation, which is due to misaligned spinal bones (vertebrae), often instigates LBP. Chiropractors, like Dr. Bonnie, correct vertebral subluxations with specialized and safe maneuvers called chiropractic adjustments.*



### Chiropractic Patients More Satisfied

Dr. Bonnie wasn't surprised by a late-breaking study showing that LBP patients who seek out chiropractic are more satisfied with their care than are medical patients.

The study tracked 681 LBP sufferers for 18 months. Patients received chiropractic care with or without physical therapy, or medical care with or without physical therapy. Researchers measured the patients' pain intensity, disability and improvement in low-back symptoms.

Compared with patients receiving medical care only, chiropractic and physical therapy patients were much more likely to report improvement and a significant reduction in symptoms (*Spine* 2006;31:611-21).

In another study, researchers collected



data from 60 chiropractic and 111 general practice physicians.

At six and 12 months, researchers measured pain and disability scores using two different standard clinical assessment tools. Researchers found that "a greater proportion of chiropractic patients were satisfied with all aspects of their care." In addition, patients with LBP that radiated below the knee reported more success with chiropractic versus medical care.

The authors summarize that "chiropractic care compared favorably to medical care with respect to long-term pain and disability outcomes." (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2001;24:543-51.)

### Fewer Painful Episodes

Just why are patients more satisfied with chiropractic care? While traditional treatment relies on medication to manage symptoms, chiropractic focuses on eliminating the underlying cause of health problems.

One experiment enrolled 2,945 LBP patients who visited one of either 14 general practice or 51 chiropractic community-based clinics. Researchers

followed patients for 12 months.

At a one-year follow up, researchers measured patients' health status, LBP duration, pain severity and level of disability.

Medical physicians prescribed medication for 80 percent of the patients assigned to their care. Doctors of chiropractic gave chiropractic adjustments to 84 percent of their patients.

A whopping 34.1 percent of patients treated by M.D.s reported 12 months of continuous pain. In contrast, only 12.7 percent of chiropractic patients reported persistent pain (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2001;24:92-100).

Another study pooled data on 138 patients with low-back pain that had lasted at least six weeks. Of this group, 93 subjects received chiropractic care provided by a doctor of chiropractic and 45 underwent medical treatment provided by a family medicine physician.

Chiropractic patients were five times more likely to experience relief than were subjects under medical care (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2001;23:239-45).

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## Chiropractors' Role as Coach

Another reason for chiropractic's effectiveness is the unique relationship formed between doctor and patient. Doctors of chiropractic work with patients as coaches, individually tailoring their care.

The partnership between chiropractor and patient empowers patients to take an active role and responsibility in recovery. Research shows that patients who approach healing this way recover faster.

## More Motivated Patients

For example, research shows that chiropractic care enhances patients' motivation to employ strategies to reduce pain and disability.

In the same large-scale study mentioned earlier, consisting of nearly 3,000 participants, chiropractic patients were more motivated than medical subjects to seek out tactics to improve LBP symptoms. Over 55 percent of chiropractic patients embraced proven, all-natural approaches to pain reduction, such as exercise and self-care education.

On the other hand, medical patients were far more likely to resort to bed rest, which is proven *ineffective* for LBP (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2001;24:543-51).

## Better Than Hospital Care

A study of 741 patients published in the *British Medical Journal* finds that chiropractic beats outpatient hospital treatment for LBP, and this benefit lasts for years. The article concludes that "at three years the results confirm the findings of an earlier report that when chiropractic or hospital therapists treat patients with low back pain as they would in day to day practice those treated by chiropractic derive more benefit and long term satisfaction than those treated by hospitals." (*BMJ* 1995;311:349-351.)

## Chiropractic Versus Muscle Relaxants

Muscle relaxants — a traditional LBP treatment — come with an array of potential side effects that range from annoying to downright deadly. Fortunately, chiropractic is more effective for LBP than muscle relaxants, according to research.

One study enrolled 192 subjects with LBP lasting at least two weeks. Patients received either chiropractic adjustments with placebo medicine, muscle relaxants with sham adjustments or placebo medicine with sham adjustments.

Subjects receiving actual chiropractic adjustments enjoyed the highest reduction in pain scores, compared with the placebo and muscle relaxant groups (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2004;27:388-98).



## Chiropractic Versus Heat Therapy

Heat therapy also scored second-rate status compared with chiropractic care for LBP. Research shows that a combined approach — chiropractic care with heat — is more effective than heat alone.

One analysis enrolled 250 patients with LBP from osteoarthritis. Subjects were randomly assigned to a group receiving chiropractic and moist heat or a moist heat only cohort for 20 sessions over several weeks.

The chiropractic plus heat patients enjoyed greater and more rapid pain

reduction and increase in range of motion than the moist heat only group. The chiropractic group also had greater improvements in daily living activities in four of nine areas, compared with the heat group (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2006;29:107-114).

## More Effective Than Acupuncture

Although acupuncture may be a beneficial adjunctive therapy to chiropractic, alone it is less effective than chiropractic for LBP, say scientists.

Investigators in Australia looked at 77 patients with spinal pain of more than 13 weeks duration. The participants received one of three treatments for roughly one month: 1) chiropractic adjustments, 2) needle acupuncture or 3) nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

According to the report, chiropractic adjustment "was the only intervention that achieved statistically significant improvements. ... Neither of the other interventions showed any significant improvement on any of the outcome measures." (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1999;22:376-81.)

## Chiropractic: A Winning Solution

If you know anyone who currently suffers from LBP, please spread the good news about chiropractic's successful, all-natural approach. If you suffer from bouts of LBP — even if it's intermittent — make an appointment with your doctor of chiropractic today. Even sporadic LBP can quickly alter into a chronic problem, for which chiropractic offers an easy and painless solution.

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