Chiropractic for MS

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Chiropractic Treatment for MS

Chiropractic therapy has been used for decades for a variety of health issues, and while many people have experienced great health benefits, there is little evidence that chiropractic adjustments can alter the course of a disease. However, research has suggested that chiropractic care may be able to relieve some MS discomfort, and in very special cases, could help halt or reverse MS progression.

Learn about what chiropractic therapy can do, what it can't do, and how to decide it it's the right choice for you.

How Can Chiropractic Treat MS?

Although there has been some research in the field, there is little irrefutable evidence that chiropractic therapy can relieve the pain and discomfort of MS. On the other hand, spinal manipulation can have quick and powerful effects on the body, and it may be worth considering if there's a place for chiropractic in your MS management.

- **Disease control –** MS patients who have experienced head or neck trauma (such as whiplash) may suffer from subluxation of the spine – that is, a misalignment of the vertebrae in the neck region. When the cervical spine is out of alignment, nerve pathways can be compromised. Since MS is a nervous system disorder, these nerve pathways play a role in MS progression and symptom flares. It follows that realigning the spine and spinal cord could improve nerve function, relieve MS symptoms, and perhaps even affect the progression of the disease.
- **Symptom relief**: Although there have been few clinical trials for chiropractic therapy in MS treatment, some patients have noticed a decrease in pain (especially in the lower back), and report less fatigue, less spasticity, and better range of motion. However, MS symptoms are tied to neurological loss, and chiropractors cannot reverse that with manual manipulation. What they can do is help you better manage the effects of MS by correcting your gait, improving muscle motion, and relieving compacted areas. The aim is to restore comfort and mobility by restoring balance and strength.

It's important to remember that MS is a complicated disease that likely involves a strong genetic component. While neck trauma may spark symptoms, it cannot be blamed for the disease itself. In turn, most experts agree that chiropractic therapy should not replace medication in your MS treatment plan.

Risks and Concerns with Chiropractic Therapy

The risks of chiropractic therapy have been cause for debate over the years, and when it come to a chronic neurological illness, they certainly can't be ignored. Although advocates ensure that chiropractic is safe for most people, it's important to weigh the side effects and risk of complications against the potential benefits before deciding on treatment:

- **Adjustments can bring new discomforts**. The hope is that spinal realignment will eradicate back pain,

tingling and muscle fatigue, but some patients have reported sore muscles, more fatigue and headaches after their spinal adjustment.

Next page: risks and concerns continued, and Dr. Donna's MS/chiropractic success story.

Risks and Concerns with Chiropractic Therapy

- **Risk of nerve and bone injury.** Although it's rare to experience a serious injury, there's a small chance that spinal manipulation can cause bone fractures, injured disks, nerve damage in the lower spine, or even stroke. Those with spine injuries, herniated disks, osteoporosis or arthritis are at a greater risk of injury.
- **Medications can lead to complications.** Patients who take blood thinners should not have chiropractic adjustments.

Since many variables can complicate chiropractic therapy, it's important to be clear and comprehensive when consulting with your doctor. If you do decide that the potential benefits of chiropractic for MS are worth the risks, make sure that your chiropractor shares information and result with your neurologist, and vice versa. The better your medical team communicates, the more likely you can avoid serious complications and continue to refine your treatment plan for a better quality of life with MS.

Dr. Donna's Success Story

"Our last two trimesters of chiropractic school were reserved for internships. We finally had the opportunity to use everything we had learned over four years. One of my first patients was an opera singer who had developed multiple sclerosis.

He was always the happiest patient, no matter how ill he felt, and he used his operatic voice to greet to everyone he met in the hallways. His attitude only made us want to help him all the more, though it was often difficult to move him in a wheelchair.

Our protocol included chiropractic treatments on the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar spine; acupuncture to stimulate the different meridians (energy channels) as needed, nutritional recommendations, and lifestyle recommendations. Of course, we always checked to see how he was doing that particular day and evaluated his overall progress every month.

The chiropractic treatments to the spine resulted in increased nervous system input to the rest of the body. A spinal misalignment of the vertebrae will cause the areas of the body innervated by the particular spinal nerve to receive nerve transmissions. In multiple sclerosis, it's the outer coating of the nerve, called the myelin, which has degraded.

It is not known whether or not chiropractic manipulations aid in the regeneration of the myelin, but we do know that multiple sclerosis patients that receive chiropractic treatments usually report feeling better than when they had gone without treatment.

In chiropractic, all treatment modalities work together. For example, once the nerve flow is going to different body parts and nutrition is taken into consideration, healing process accelerates. The combined effects of acupuncture and chiropractic manipulation are greater than each treatment by itself.

The opera singer said he would be lost without his chiropractic treatments. His wife wholeheartedly agreed."