

The Best Choices For Sciatica and Chronic Back Pain

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A new study has revealed the most effective treatment for acute (less than seven weeks) and chronic back pain (more than seven weeks). It shows chiropractic care to be significantly more effective than traditional medical care for chronic back pain and especially for back pain patients who also have radiating pain into the leg (sciatica).¹

Unlike some previous studies that only evaluated spinal manipulation, this study compared traditional medical care to chiropractic care. While the vast majority of the chiropractic patients in this study did receive manipulation (adjustment) many were also given an exercise plan, self-care recommendations (ADL), and/or other forms of physical therapy. Medical patients received prescription drugs, exercise plans, and self-care advice.

The groups reported improvements in pain and disability showing

both medical and chiropractic care was effective, but chiropractic patients did much better overall, especially with chronic pain

Leg pain often accompanies back pain and the researchers looked at the subgroup of patients with leg pain separately. They found that chiropractic patients with pain radiating from the back and into the leg (sciatica), did far better than that same such group that was under medical care.

The researchers found this to be a clinically important advantage and concluded that chiropractic care demonstrated an advantage over medical care for patients with chronic low back pain, particularly for those with radiating leg pain.²

This study was interesting to me in a number of ways. While there have been many studies in the past proving chiropractic care effective for acute back pain, there have only been a few high quality studies done for chronic pain, especially with sciatic pain, until recently.

Many of the patients achieved

near complete relief, often quickly, especially those with acute pain. But 46% (nearly half) of the total participants still had enough pain to have returned for care (either medical or chiropractic) during the third and fourth year of the study.

Another interesting conclusion of this exhaustive study was that back pain does not simply go away on its own, as has often been claimed in the past. Finally, while we recognize the need for medical care for many ailments and conditions, we feel combined medical care with chiropractic care is often the most ideal if faced with a choice of care for back pain. We think this study shows chiropractic care is still the best choice, yielding equal or superior results without using any drugs or invasive surgical procedures.

If you, a friend or family member has back pain, the research clearly and overwhelmingly shows, chiropractic care to be the most effective and safest method of treatment, as well as the least expensive.

1 M. Haas, et al., "A Practice-Based Study of Patients with Acute & Chronic Low Back Pain Attending Primary Care and Chiropractic Physicians: Two-week to 48-month Follow-up," March/April 2004, *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 160-169.

2 Ibid, p. 167