

# Relief At Last For Chronic Neck and Back Pain

By James L. Holding, DC, CCSP,  
Holding Chiropractic &  
Sports Injury Center

Chiropractic adjustments provided long-term relief of both chronic back and neck pain according to a recent study. The study compared pain medications, acupuncture, and chiropractic care. The researchers concluded that of these three methods of care, chiropractic was the only one that provided "broad and significant long-term benefit."<sup>1</sup>

This year long study was a follow up study to an earlier 9-week study that was done so carefully and had such significant conclusions that it was published in the prestigious medical journal *Spine* in 2003. That article, much like the new follow up study, concluded that for patients with chronic spinal pain chiropractic care "results in greater short-term improvement than acupuncture or medication."<sup>2</sup> All the patients had suffered with back and/or

neck pain for at least 13 weeks but most had suffered for years because their average duration of pain exceeded two years. Their pain was chronic and long-term. Within a short 9-week trial, complete recovery from long term chronic conditions is rarely expected yet 27.3% of the chiropractic patients were totally symptom free after 9 weeks, compared to only 9.4% for the acupuncture group and 5% for the medication group.<sup>3</sup>

In the one-year follow-up study they found the chiropractic group maintained statistically significant improvements in 5 of the 7 outcomes while the acupuncture and medicine groups had only one outcome significantly improved. The medicine group even got worse in two outcome measures.<sup>4</sup>

It is also perhaps noteworthy that those in the medicine group were given Celebrex unless the patient had already tried that, in which case the second choice was Vioxx, or lastly

acetaminophen (best known as Tylenol) if both had been used. At the time of the study the risk of heart attack from Vioxx was not known by practicing doctors. Not only were the drugs less effective than chiropractic care for these patients, but this drug had serious unknown risks as well. Drugs often have known side effects, which are bad enough, but unknown risks are reason enough to try other measures first. Chiropractic care uses no drugs or surgery, has virtually no side effects, and as the studies show, can be more effective than the other treatments as well. With the current research and clinical findings available, back pain and neck pain are now more treatable than ever before. Individuals with back and neck problems are truly in need of safe and effective evaluation and treatment. As a specialist of the spine, the Doctor of Chiropractic is now recognized as most qualified to deal with back and neck problems.

<sup>1</sup> R. Muller and L. Giles, "Long Term Follow-up of Randomized Clinical Trial Assessing the Efficacy of Medication, Acupuncture, and Spinal Manipulation for Chronic Mechanical Spinal Pain Syndromes," January 2005.

<sup>2</sup> L. Giles & R. Muller, "Chronic Spinal Pain: A Randomized Clinical Trial Assessing the Efficacy of Medication, Acupuncture, and Spinal Manipulation," July 15, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> R. Muller & L. Giles, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.