



CALIFORNIA CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION

EDUCATE YOUR PATIENTS ON STROKE RISK FROM CHIROPRACTIC TREATMENT

Study in *Neurology* Flawed and Offers Nothing New

As many CCA members are aware, the May 13, 2003, edition of the journal *Neurology* reported that spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) was an independent risk factor for vertebral artery dissection (VAD), a form of stroke. The study was widely reported on in the media and has needlessly alarmed and raised questions by chiropractic patients and prospective patients. The retrospective study failed to uncover any new information on this topic. CCA responded to numerous media inquiries and released a statement refuting the journal's allegations. Below is information you can use and share with your CAs to educate current and prospective patients on the safety of chiropractic treatment relative to strokes.

- The type of stroke alleged by the study to be associated with cervical spine manipulation, VAD, has been associated with many common activities such as talking on the telephone, swimming, overhead work and washing one's hair.
- A biomechanical study has shown that the forces used in cervical spine manipulation are one-ninth the force necessary to damage a normal vertebral artery, or less than the forces placed on the artery during normal movements of the neck.
- Estimates of the odds of suffering a serious complication from a chiropractic neck treatment are about one out of every two million treatments, or the same odds one would die in a commercial airline crash. Conversely, it is estimated 120,000 people die annually due to medical error, or the equivalent of a crash of a jumbo jet every day.

Adverse event rates for common medical procedures are greater than those associated with chiropractic treatment:

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| • Overall mortality rate for spinal surgery: | 700 in one million |
| • Death rate from cervical spine surgery | 700 in one million |
| • Rate of serious or life-threatening complications from spinal stenosis surgery | 5 in 100 |
| • Risk of gastrointestinal bleeding resulting in death for treatment of osteoarthritis with anti inflammatory medications (NSAIDs): | 400 in one million |

Risks of death for every day life activities are much greater than risks associated with chiropractic treatment:

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| • Soccer, football: | 1 in 25,500 |
| • Motorcycling: | 1 in 50 |
| • Use of contraceptive pills | 1 in 5,000 |
| • Power boating | 1 in 5,900 |
| • Skiing | 1 in 430,000 |

Doing nothing to treat neck or back pain through chiropractic treatment may result in increased risks of disability, increased use of prescription drugs for pain relief, disruption of social or work activities, and the pain becoming chronic and permanent.