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Flu season wellness plan should include chiropractic care

CHANDLER, ARIZ, Nov. 8, 2004 -- The World Chiropractic Alliance (WCA) is recommending that people of all ages add chiropractic to their strategy for warding off and fighting the flu and its effects this season.

Spinal adjustments can have a positive effect on immune function, the WCA asserts, citing a growing number of researchers who are exploring the common denominators in disease processes, and the role of the nervous, immune, and hormonal systems in development of immune related illnesses,

Chiropractic corrects spinal abnormalities called vertebral subluxations that result in interference of the nervous system by placing pressure on nerves. Since the nervous system controls all functions of the body -- including the immune system -- chiropractic care can have a positive effect on immune function, WCA officials note.

"Contemporary research is beginning to shed light on the neurobiological mechanisms which may explain the outstanding clinical results chiropractors have experienced when managing patients with viral and infectious diseases," stated Dr. Christopher Kent, WCA Vice President.

Dr. Kent explained: "A comprehensive review of the research literature reveals the current understanding that the brain and immune system are the two major adaptive systems in the body. During an immune response, the brain and the immune system 'talk to each other' and this process is essential for maintaining homeostasis or balance in the body."

Since its inception, chiropractic has asserted that viruses and microbes don't threaten us all equally and that a healthy immune system easily repels most invaders. The immune system protects us from the flu, as well as any other infectious disease, and strives to get us well again when we do fall ill. Our immune system, like every other system in the body, is coordinated and controlled by the nervous system.

Chiropractors are also aware of the importance of positive health life style practices (rest, drinking ample quantities of water, diet, exercise, proper food choices, use of high potency multivitamins and minerals, and stress reduction approaches) that can also positively influence the nervous system and immune response. According to a large study of the chiropractic profession recently conducted by the Institute for Social Research, Ohio Northern University (McDonald et al., 2003), chiropractors also customarily advise their patients as to the benefits of these other modalities in optimizing overall body function.

★ Chiropractors helping patients battle the flu is not a new occurrence either. During the 1917-18 influenza epidemic, which brought death and fear to many Americans, it has been estimated that 20 million people died throughout the world, including about 500,000 Americans. It was chiropractic's success in caring for flu victims that led to the profession's licensure in many states.

Researchers reported that in Davenport, Iowa, out of the 93,590 patients treated by medical doctors, there were 6,116 deaths -- a loss of one patient out of every 15. Chiropractors at the Palmer School of Chiropractic adjusted 1,635 cases, with only one death. Outside Davenport, chiropractors in Iowa cared for 4,735 cases with only six deaths -- one out of 866. During the same epidemic, in Oklahoma, out of 3,490 flu patients under chiropractic care, there were only seven deaths. Furthermore, chiropractors were called in 233 cases given up as lost after medical treatment, and reportedly saved all but 25. In another report covering 4,193 cases by 213 chiropractors 4,104 showed complete recovery.

"These results are not so surprising given what we now know about the interaction between the nervous system and the immune system" stated Dr. Matthew McCoy, WCA Board member and Editor of the Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research. "Through research we know that chiropractic has beneficial effects on immunoglobulins, B-lymphocytes (white blood cells), pulmonary function and other immune system processes."

One such study, conducted by Patricia Brennan Ph.D and her team, found that when a chiropractic "manipulation" was applied to the middle back, the response of polymorphonuclear neutrophils (white blood cells) taken from blood collected 15 minutes after the manipulation was significantly higher than blood collected 15 minutes before and 30 and 45 minutes after the chiropractic procedure. This research demonstrated an "enhanced respiratory burst" following the chiropractic adjustment. This "burst" is

needed for our immune cells to destroy invading viruses and bacteria.

Another small study of HIV positive patients was conducted to study the effects of specific chiropractic adjustments to correct vertebral subluxations in the upper neck on the immune systems of HIV positive individuals. Over the six-month period of the study, the group that did not receive chiropractic care experienced a 7.96% decrease in CD4 cell counts, while the adjusted group experienced a 48% increase in CD4 cell counts over the same period.

A large retrospective study conducted by Dr. Robert Blanks and colleagues studied 2,818 individuals undergoing chiropractic care - these individuals reported an average overall improvement, ranging from 7-28%, in a battery of physical symptoms including stiffness/lack of flexibility in the spine, physical pain, fatigue, incidence of colds and flu, headaches, menstrual discomfort, gastrointestinal disorders, allergies, dizziness and falls (Blanks et al., 1997, Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research).

More importantly, the incidence of colds and flu was reduced by an average of 15% in this large population who were undergoing regular chiropractic care.

According to Dr. Terry Rondberg, president of the World Chiropractic Alliance, "While we would love to say we (chiropractors) figured this out, the truth is we didn't. We simply take advantage of it to help our patients."

He added that, "In many ways this is old news since the relationship between the nervous system and the immune system was reported by the New York Times in 1993. According to that article 'Scientists have found the first evidence of an anatomical connection between the nervous system and the immune system. Nerve cell endings in the skin and white blood cells of the immune system are in intimate contact, and chemicals secreted by the nerves can shut down immune system cells nearby.' Our health care system needs to catch up with the research."

"I would recommend to any person concerned about the upcoming flu season to add chiropractic to their list of things to do to remove interference to their nervous system, enhance their immune function and give their body every extra bit of security it needs" stated Dr. Rondberg.

The World Chiropractic Alliance (WCA), an international organization representing doctors of chiropractic. WCA promotes the traditional, drug-free and non-invasive form of chiropractic as a means of correcting vertebral subluxations that cause nerve interference. The WCA is a NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information.

For more information visit the World Chiropractic Alliance's website at <http://www.worldchiropracticalliance.org>.