

Leach

Chiropractic Clinic, Inc.

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April 2007 Newsletter:

Acute Moderate Back pain or Discal hernia and Sciatica: RCT of Chiropractic vs. Placebo

Dear Patients and Friends:

The most recent randomized control group trial of chiropractic manipulation for acute moderate back or disc pain with leg pain (sciatica) was reported in the prestigious medical journal *Spine* last year.

Sixty-four men and 38 women aged 19 to 63 were randomized to chiropractic manipulation (53) or placebo (49) manipulations, at rehabilitation centers in and around Rome, Italy. Chiropractic adjustments or simulated adjustments (placebo) were administered five times per week for up to one month, and blinded examiners evaluated the patients.

Six months later only 6% of patients receiving placebo adjustments were free of back pain, while 28% of patients receiving actual chiropractic adjustments no longer had back pain. Similarly, only 20% of patients with sciatica were pain free after placebo, while 55% of patients with leg pain were pain free after chiropractic adjustments at six months. Patients receiving actual chiropractic adjustments had fewer days with pain, and fewer days with moderate or severe pain as well. All findings were statistically significant, as well as clinically meaningful.

Only two patients failed to improve at all, one receiving chiropractic adjustments, and one receiving placebo adjustments. There were no adverse reactions reported. So what does this study tell us?

First, the study confirms many other studies in the past two decades that show that the natural history of even moderate to severe back and leg pain favors remission. Put simply, patients receiving both chiropractic treatment and placebo improved over six months. Remember that May 2005 study reported in the *British Medical Journal* that revealed no clinically meaningful differences two years after chronic disc hernia patients were randomized to back surgery or rehabilitative exercises? Surgeons concluded that there was no compelling evidence that surgery was more effective than exercise, and that both groups had significant reductions in disability two years later. Still another study of 501 subjects reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in November 2006, that there were no meaningful differences in outcomes between patients randomized to surgical discectomy or non-operative treatment including physical therapy.

Second, more than twice the number of pain free cases occurred among patients receiving actual adjustments. The finding that even serious disc and leg pain cases improve faster and achieve more total remissions with chiropractic should come as no surprise. The landmark 1995 study by Meade and co-workers published in the *British Medical Journal* had a decade earlier demonstrated that of nearly 800 patients, those with the worst and most chronic pains had decidedly less Oswestry ratings of disability after chiropractic, compared with those receiving physiotherapy.

Finally, even when you, your friends or loved ones have serious back or leg pain, you can be confident that in most cases the back or leg pain will resolve or at least improve greatly over time, and that chiropractic speeds healing for most patients. You can be confident we will guide you through exercises that will make your back stronger. And in the unusual cases that do not respond adequately, we will refer you for imaging and referral to find answers and the best treatment for your problem. We know the value of working with your primary care provider and other specialists. For example, over the past two years some of our most serious disc hernia cases have responded to a combination of chiropractic and either oral or epidural steroid injections, preventing the need for back surgery and returning patients to work without disability.

Please do remember to spread the word and tell your friends and loved ones about our services, so they too can benefit from chiropractic.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert A. Leach

For More Resources on this subject:

- To review the primary reference for this article go to: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed&cmd=Retrieve&dopt=AbstractPlus&list_uids=16517383&query_hl=6&itool=pubmed_DocSum
- To review the Meade et al research: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed&cmd=Retrieve&dopt=AbstractPlus&list_uids=7640538&query_hl=13&itool=pubmed_docsum
- For information about chiropractic education and research: <http://www.fcer.org/>
- For information about chiropractic in Italy and around the world: <http://www.wfc.org/>
- To review the latest study comparing back surgery with non-operative physical therapy: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed&cmd=Retrieve&dopt=AbstractPlus&list_uids=7640538&query_hl=13&itool=pubmed_docsum

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