

## Chiropractic Does Not Increase Risk of Stroke

In February 2008, the prestigious journal *Spine* reported that patients are **not** more likely to suffer a stroke following chiropractic manipulation than they would after visiting their family doctor. Therefore, there is **no excess stroke risk from chiropractic care versus other medical care.**

In this 2008 study, the medical research team looked at nine years of data and found that only 818 patients with a cervical artery tear and stroke were reported among a population of 11.5 million people. Unlike an earlier, poorly designed, 2001 study that only focused on strokes and chiropractic care, this 2008 study also included visits to family doctors that preceded this kind of stroke. No difference in risk was found among patients who sought care from family doctors or chiropractors.

The 2008 *Spine* study goes on to say that any observed association between stroke and chiropractic manipulation is likely due to patients having an undiagnosed, impending, vertebral artery tear seeking care for resultant neck pain and headaches. Any movement of the neck, along with this very rare arterial condition, may lead to the formation of a blood clot that can break free and travel until it lodges in the brain's base, blocking circulation.

There are many published reports of spontaneous cervical artery tears occurring with everyday activities that most people would consider nontraumatic, such as turning the head when driving, having one's hair washed at a beauty salon, or sleeping on one's abdomen.

Just as a person suffering with chest pain does not have a heart attack because of visiting a cardiologist, a person with neck pain and headaches does not have a cervical artery tear and stroke because of visiting a chiropractor. In either case, the disease process is already progressing prior to medical intervention, and the patient is only seeking care for the symptoms created by the condition.

### Stroke Warning Signs

While there are no standard screening procedures to identify patients with neck pain who are also at risk of a vertebral artery stroke, one should be aware of the following stroke warning signs:

- \* Sudden difficulty speaking (slurred speech).
- \* Sudden confusion or altered mental status, such as loss of consciousness or not recognizing people who should be familiar.
- \* Sudden numbness or tingling on one side of the face or body or both.
- \* Sudden onset of dizziness or unsteadiness, loss of balance or coordination or both.
- \* Sudden difficulty walking or standing upright.
- \* Sudden severe headache.
- \* Sudden severe, unexplained upper-neck pain.
- \* Sudden trouble with vision.

Chiropractic manipulation is a very safe and effective treatment for a multitude of musculoskeletal conditions. To fully appreciate overall chiropractic safety, one should keep in mind that according to a study from the *American Journal of Gastroenterology*, approximately one-third of all hospitalizations and deaths related to gastrointestinal bleeding can be attributed to the use of aspirin, ibuprofen, or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) commonly used for musculoskeletal pain.

If you or someone you know is suffering from pain and has not found the relief for which for which you are looking, please call our office, we may be able to help.

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