

Public Statement on Chiropractic & Pediatric Care in Canada

CCA Statement, re: ‘This. Hurts. Babies’: Doctors alarmed at weekend course teaching chiropractors how to adjust newborn spines’ by Sharon Kirkey – National Post – Published: July 2, 2019

TORONTO, July 5, 2019 – The recent article, *‘This. Hurts. Babies’: Doctors alarmed at weekend course teaching chiropractors how to adjust newborn spines’* and accompanying video, written by Sharon Kirkey and published in the National Post on July 2, 2019, misleads Canadians about the value and practice of chiropractic care.

Millions of Canadians of all ages visit a chiropractor each year and there is a growing body of scientific evidence showing the value of chiropractic in the treatment of conditions and disorders related to the muscular, skeletal and nervous systems. Chiropractic treatments can effectively relieve pain, restore function and mobility and improve health outcomes for all Canadians, including children.

While Daniel David Palmer is considered the founder of chiropractic, the profession — like other mainstream healthcare fields — has evolved, growing more reliant on evidence-based, patient-centred care.

We’ll give Ms. Kirkey the benefit of the doubt and assume she’s unaware of the extent of the curriculum taught at Canada’s two chiropractic colleges.

We’ll also acknowledge that a 12-hour continuing education course does not give one sufficient education or training to make a claim of expertise – in the field of pediatric chiropractic or any other field. As we have no affiliation with the course provider, we cannot comment on course quality or its teachings. And the claim that “most newborns need a spinal adjustment to unblock nervous system interference caused by the trauma of passing through the birth canal”, referenced in the article, is not supported by current scientific evidence.

Continuing education courses are common in all health professions. They afford practitioners the opportunity to learn about the latest evidence, guidelines and best practices and are intended to improve patient outcomes and care. However, in the case of chiropractors, continuing education courses aren’t their first introduction to pediatrics.

While there is no recognized pediatric specialization in chiropractic in Canada, pediatrics and pre- and ante-natal care are an integral component of the four-year chiropractic curriculum and include relevant topics such as embryology, genetics, congenital and developmental defects, maturation of the skeletal system, etc. Students also complete over 50 hours of coursework in pediatric diagnosis and management and antenatal care, followed by a mandatory one-year internship during which they care for patients of all ages under the supervision of an experienced chiropractor.

Chiropractic students must also complete a series of clinical competency examinations, which include pediatrics. These exams are administered by the Canadian Chiropractic Examining Board and students must pass these exams before obtaining their license to practice. Treating pediatric patients is part of chiropractic care in Canada, which is overseen by provincial regulators. These regulators are charged with protecting the public interest.

Chiropractic is not simply the technique of adjustments or manipulations, although this is a common misconception. Chiropractors use a range of techniques, supplementary procedures and advice in the provision of comprehensive patient care. As allied health professionals, chiropractors also work

collaboratively with a range of other healthcare providers using a collaborative care approach to co-manage and provide advice and referrals in the best interests of the patient.

Chiropractors put patient safety first. This is especially true with pediatric patients. When treating infants and children, chiropractors follow best practices. This includes modifying techniques and the application of force to support the needs and comfort of the child.^{1,2}

Chiropractic expertise in the musculoskeletal system comes not only from seven years of intensive post-secondary education and practical hours, but also from a growing body of rigorous research. Since 1976, the Canadian Chiropractic Research Foundation (CCRF) has been funding chiropractic research to discover the best, evidence-informed treatments for patients living with pain and disability caused by spinal dysfunction and disease.

Chiropractic research provides the evidence upon which the chiropractic profession bases best practices and patient-centred treatment – what is known in all health professions as “evidence-based” treatment. Canada boasts a vibrant community of chiropractic researchers who actively collaborate in interprofessional research initiatives, providing the scientific basis on using chiropractic treatment to improve MSK conditions and injuries.

The body of knowledge that comes from research allows chiropractors to provide safe, scientifically-sound treatments in their practice – bringing the most advanced methods to patient care. Chiropractic research also informs other health professionals who partner with chiropractors to deliver quality MSK treatment to their patients.

Existing evidence related to pediatric chiropractic treatment draws heavily on inter-professional and international research studies. Available evidence suggests moderately positive or favourable outcomes in pediatric populations.

While the evidence for pediatric conditions is limited, research in this area is ongoing and growing. Like other healthcare professions the processes and challenges of translating an ever-increasing evidence base into practice is a healthcare wide issue not a chiropractic-specific one, but one that the chiropractic profession and educators take seriously.

The Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA) is the national, voluntary association representing Canada’s licensed Doctors of Chiropractic. Chiropractors provide the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and preventative care of biomechanical disorders originating from the muscular, skeletal and nervous systems. Approximately 4.5 million Canadians use the services of a chiropractor each year. The CCA advocates on behalf of members and their patients to advance the quality and accessibility of chiropractic care in Canada and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the healthcare system.

Media please contact:

Tari Stork
Director of Public Affairs
Canadian Chiropractic Association
905-868-9188

¹ Hawk C, Schneider MJ, Vallone S, Hewitt EG: Best practices for chiropractic care of children: a consensus update. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2016, 39(3):158-168.
[https://www.jmptonline.org/article/S0161-4754\(16\)00062-2/pdf](https://www.jmptonline.org/article/S0161-4754(16)00062-2/pdf)

² Angela J. Todd, Matthew T. Carroll, et. al., Adverse Events due to chiropractic and other Manual Therapies for Infants and Children: A Review of the Literature, *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological*

