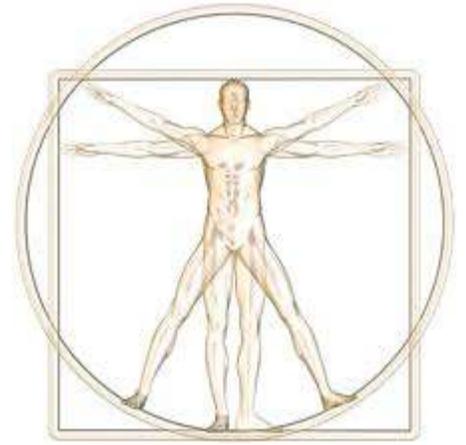


THE CHIROPRACTIC PATIENT EXPERIENCE

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In last month's article "An Introduction to Chiropractic Care", we specifically focused on the training and education of chiropractors, regulation of chiropractic, and the scope of chiropractic care. This article will focus on the chiropractic patient experience written specifically from the author's perspective of what patients experience at his private practice. Individual chiropractic experiences may vary in different chiropractic settings dependent on practitioner interests, experience, education, and training.

Chiropractors provide diagnosis, treatment and management of disorders arising from the musculoskeletal system (joints, muscles, tendons, nerves, and bones), such as back pain and neck pain. Before any treatment is commenced on a prospective chiropractic patient, there are several steps that are taken to ensure the case is one that can be helped with chiropractic care.

First, a thorough **Medical History** is taken which documents an individual's specific complaint and may also include questions concerning past surgeries and illnesses, medication use, general and family health history. Second, a **Physical Examination** is performed consisting of orthopedic, neurological, and range of motion testing. X-rays may also be ordered to help determine the source of pain or dysfunction. Third, a **Diagnosis and Prognosis** is provided to the patient to let them know if their complaint(s) can benefit from chiropractic care. If the complaint will not benefit from chiropractic care, a referral is made to the appropriate health discipline.

For all complaints that may benefit from chiropractic care, a proposed treatment plan is communicated to the patient, including type of treatment and duration. Factors taken into consideration when developing a treatment plan for a particular individual include age, sex, severity and duration of complaint, lifestyle and environmental factors, physical health and fitness, medication use, and any other relevant health conditions. In addition, factors relating to patient concerns and preferences are also taken into account, because patients always have a choice as to the type of care they wish to receive.

Chiropractors are trained to offer multi-modal physical therapy incorporating the use of different techniques commonly employed in combination with each other to decrease pain, stimulate healing, and restore overall function. **Chiropractic adjustments** and **mobilizations** are just one mode of therapy utilized by chiropractors (but not with every patient), to restore normal motion and functioning in joints. **Soft tissue therapy** is used to alleviate muscle spasm, decrease scar tissue, and increase pain free ranges of motion. **Electrotherapy** involves the application of relaxing therapeutic electrical current or sound waves to the area of injury, dysfunction, or pain (i.e. TENS, interferential current, ultrasound). **Acupuncture** can be used to promote healing, decrease pain, and control inflammation. **Rehabilitative exercise prescription** may also be used to improve balance, coordination, strength, flexibility, and posture.



Contemporary chiropractic care provides many options for prospective and current patients seeking effective and safe therapy for their musculoskeletal complaints. Additional chiropractic resources can be found at: (www.nhwc.ca), (www.chiropractic.on.ca), and (www.ccachiro.org).

This article is a basic summary for educational purposes only. It is not intended, and should not be considered, as a replacement for consultation, diagnosis or treatment by a duly licensed health practitioner.