



# Injury Briefing

*A review of the latest studies from Dr. Michael D. Berry.*

## **Chiropractic Neck Adjustments Safe for Seniors**

Chiropractic neck adjustments for older adults are unlikely to cause vertebrobasilar stroke, concludes the results of a recent study.

“Chiropractic cervical spine manipulation is unlikely to cause stroke in patients aged 66 to 99 years with neck pain,” researchers publishing in the *Journal Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* wrote.

This is the first population-based study on the risk of vertebrobasilar stroke (VBS) after spinal manipulation and the first such study to focus on older adults.

James M. Whedon, DC, MS, an instructor at Dartmouth College, and his colleagues analyzed the medical history of 1.2 million Medicare part B beneficiaries between 66 and 99 years old.

Patients were divided into two cohorts: 1) Those who visited a chiropractor and received spinal manipulation for neck pain in 2007, but did not visit a primary care physician, and 2) those who visited a primary care doctor but not a chiropractor for neck pain that same year.

Within the first 24 days after an office visit, chiropractic patients actually had a lower risk of stroke than primary care patients. This trend reversed after day 25, but researchers wrote that “these temporal associations are of doubtful clinical significance.”

Among the chiropractic patients, researchers found that “the incidence (of VBS) was less than 9.8 cases per one million.” Their findings were “remarkably consistent” with results reported by Lee et al, which found that an incidence of 9.7 cases of VBS per one million.

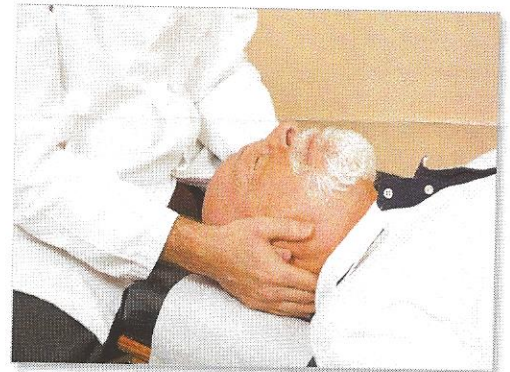
These findings confirm that chiropractic is a safe, practical treatment for older adults experiencing neck pain or whiplash. Chiropractors often use low-force spinal manipulations on older adults, children or other sensitive patients. These gentler treatments can still deliver the benefits of chiropractic care — namely, pain relief without the side effects of drugs.

### **Study: Whiplash unlikely to cause fibromyalgia**

Whiplash often causes chronic pain but rarely results in fibromyalgia, suggests the results of a new study.

Only 0.8 percent of whiplash victims developed fibromyalgia one year after their initial injury, Canadian researchers reported in *RMD Open*.

Comparatively, the prevalence of fibromyalgia in the general population is estimated to be 2.2 percent,



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so it is unlikely that acute whiplash is a risk factor for developing the disorder characterized by widespread chronic pain and fatigue.

"Causation between acute whiplash injury and fibromyalgia should not be implied via the results of the current study," wrote Robert Ferrari, MD, of the University of Alberta.

Ferrari evaluated 268 patients with acute whiplash injuries who visited a primary care doctor within 14 days of an auto collision.

Follow-up evaluations were conducted at 3 months, 6 months and 1 year after their injuries. Patients were asked if they believed they had recovered and were also assessed for fibromyalgia using the 2010 Modified American College of Rheumatology (ACR) criteria.

After three months, 62 percent of patients reported recovery from whiplash. That percentage jumped to 76 percent after six months and 82 percent after one year. That left 18 percent of patients who were at risk of fibromyalgia after one year.

"When one examines the non-recovered participants, however, even though they have chronic pain and disability, they often report very localized pain disorders, such as chronic headache, chronic neck pain only, or even chronic low back pain only," wrote Ferrari — instead of the telltale fibromyalgia signs of widespread chronic pain.

Chiropractic care is an effective treatment for both whiplash and fibromyalgia symptoms, and may help reduce the risk that patients experience lasting symptoms after auto injuries.

### *References:*

*Whedon, J. Risk of stroke after chiropractic spinal manipulation in Medicare B beneficiaries aged 66 to 99 years old with neck pain. Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics; 38 (2): 93-101.*

*Ferrari, R. A prospective study of the 1-year incidence of fibromyalgia after acute whiplash injury. RMD Open 2015;1:e000007 doi:10.1136/rmdopen-2014-000007.*