



Injury Briefing

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

Texting Behind the Wheel Now Leading Killer of Teen Drivers

Texting while driving has officially surpassed drinking and driving as the leading cause of death from motor vehicle collisions among teenagers. The number of teen deaths and injuries as a result of texting and driving crashes has reached new highs as more and more young people use mobile devices.

According to researchers at Cohen Children's Medical Center and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the estimated number of teen deaths from texting and driving is 3,000 per year, compared to around 2,700 who die after driving drunk. The number of injuries is also greater among those texting compared to those drinking, with 300,000 texting-and-driving injuries and 282,000 drinking-and-driving injuries.

In addition to the increased numbers of phone users, the data is also a result of a dramatic decline in drunk driving among adolescents. Additionally, drinking is typically a behavior that most teens engage in only occasionally, while texting is a daily activity.

A team of researchers at Cohen Children's Medical Center also found about 49% of boys and 45% of girls aged 15 to 18 admitted to texting while driving. They also discovered that older teens were more likely to engage in the risky behavior, with 58% of 18-year-olds acknowledging that they do it regularly.

Typing and engaging in text conversation is especially dangerous compared to other distracted driving habits. The activity involves manual, visual, and mental distractions, all at the same time.

Adolescents aren't the only drivers endangering themselves and others with mobile devices. Other research has found that up to one-third of adult drivers aged 30 to 64 admitted to sending text messages while driving. Another recent study revealed the ineffectiveness of laws prohibiting texting and driving among adolescent drivers. Comparing states with laws to states without them, researchers found an insignificant difference in the numbers of teens taking the risk.

Ricks D. Study: Texting while driving now leading cause of death for teen drivers. Newsday May 8, 2013.
Olsen O'Malley E, et al. Texting while driving and other risky motor vehicle behaviors among US high-school students. Pediatric 2013. doi: 10.1542/peds.2012-3462.

Neck Adjustments Immediately Improve Joint Position Sense

New research shows¹ that spinal adjustments can result in immediate improvements in cervical joint function. A new study from Korea Nazarene University shows that cervical manipulation, also called neck adjustments, can significantly improve joint position sense, which may improve neck mobility in patients with neck pain or whiplash.

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Joint position sense is a major component of proprioception, or the body's awareness and ability to control your limbs without looking at them. Patients with neck pain and whiplash injuries have been found to have impaired joint position sense in their neck and upper limbs. This may limit the ability of the joint to move fluidly with speed and accuracy. Poor joint position sense in neck pain patients has also been tied to symptoms of dizziness. Earlier research² has shown that neck adjustments, commonly used by chiropractors, can improve elbow joint position sense. However, there have been no studies on the effects of neck adjustments on healthy individuals without neck pain.

Korean researchers examined the effects of neck adjustments on the joint position sense in a group of 30 healthy volunteers. Half the volunteers were treated with neck adjustments and light massage while the other half was treated exclusively with massage. Joint position sense was determined by measuring joint position error before and after the interventions using a digital dual inclinometer. The participants were shown twice how to position their necks at six different angles (such as 35 degrees flexion and a 35 degree extension) and then were asked to recreate that angle on their own. The difference in the position measured and the correct angle was calculated as the joint position error.

All participants showed improvements in joint position sense after treatment. However, participants who received a neck adjustment had significantly better improvements in two of the angles measured (left lateral flexion and left rotation) compared to the massage-only group. The researchers suggested that massage had the capacity to improve joint position sense, but that the combined treatment of neck adjustments and massage was the most effective for increasing range of motion. They concluded by recommending that cervical joint manipulation and massage be used in combination when treating patients with reduced joint position sense due to decrease range of motion, neck pain, or whiplash.

The findings suggest that chiropractic neck adjustments could immediately improve cervical range of motion, which may help to explain why patients may experience reduced neck pain after a single session of chiropractic care.

1. *Gong, Wontae. Effects of cervical joint manipulation on joint position sense of normal adults. Journal of Physical Therapy Science 2013;25:721-723.*
2. *Haavik H, and Murphy B. Subclinical neck pain and the effects of cervical manipulation on elbow joint position sense. Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics 2011; 34(2):88-97.*