

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Katie Gravesen, DC

Cochrane Review Study Supports Chiropractic Care for Chronic Low-Back Pain

A large review study published by the prestigious Cochrane Library confirms that chiropractic is as effective as common medical interventions, such as painkillers, for chronic low-back pain. It is also safe and free of the hazardous potential adverse effects of medical interventions. Dr. Gravesen has outlined these scientific findings in lay-person terms, so that patients can learn about this groundbreaking study.

What Is Chronic Low-Back Pain?

Chronic low-back pain (CLBP) is a condition in which low-back pain persists long term. It is often defined as pain lasting more than 12 weeks. Frequently, medical treatment fails to eradicate CLBP. Symptoms of CLBP may wax and wane, but they endure.

The Spinal Connection

Dr. Gravesen focuses on correcting a spinal condition called **vertebral subluxation** — a disorder characterized by restricted spinal movement or the misalignment of spinal bones (vertebrae).

Dr. Gravesen corrects vertebral subluxations with gentle and effective maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**. And chiropractic adjustments have been shown to be more effective than other methods for alleviating chronic low-back pain.

The Cochrane study looked specifically at the use of chiropractic adjustments, also known as spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) for CLBP.

What Is a Cochrane Review?

The *Cochrane Library* is a division of the Cochrane Collaboration. According to their Web site, the Cochrane



Collaboration “is an international network of people helping healthcare providers, policy makers, patients, their advocates and carers, make well-informed decisions about human health care by preparing, updating and promoting the accessibility of Cochrane Reviews – over 4,500 so far, published online in *The Cochrane Library*.”

Cochrane Reviewers look at all the previous studies published on a certain topic that meet quality standards.

“All the existing primary research on a topic that meets certain criteria is searched for and collated, and then assessed using stringent guidelines, to establish whether or not there is conclusive evidence about a specific treatment. The reviews are updated regularly, ensuring that treatment decisions can be based on the most up-to-date and reliable evidence.”

“Cochrane Reviews are designed to facilitate the choices that practitioners, consumers, policy-makers and others face in health care. No other organization matches the volume, scope and range of healthcare topics addressed by Cochrane Reviews.”

How Can I Find Out More About Chiropractic Wellness Research?

If you are interested in research documenting the benefits of chiropractic, you have come to the right place! Dr. Gravesen is committed to providing patients with research in chiropractic wellness and related fields, such as nutrition, stress-reduction, environmental influences on health, exercise and how one's attitude affects well-being.

To this end, each week Dr. Gravesen presents a new, *Optimal Health University*® topic. This office is focused on teaching our patients and community about this vital health information, which will jump-start them on the road to wellness. To find out more about this revolutionary approach to patient education, or to suggest future *Optimal Health University*® topics, please call our office today!

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Who Conducted the Study?

The review was conducted by a group of five researchers at the VU University of Amsterdam Medical Center in the Netherlands. Specifically, the review was headquartered at the EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

Dr. Sidney Rubinstein, a postdoctoral researcher at the VU University Medical Center in Amsterdam, and a practicing chiropractor, served as lead author of the study.

How Many Studies Were Included In the Review?

The review looked at 26 studies, including a total of 6,070 participants.

What Type of Studies Were Included in the Review?

Studies included in the review met stringent criteria for quality. All the investigations included were **randomized controlled studies**.

Randomization refers to a study in which participants are randomly assigned to different types of treatment. Randomization prevents those conducting the study to assign patients who may be more likely to benefit from a certain treatment to that particular group. This prevents bias.

A **controlled** study compares a group of patients receiving a particular treatment to a **control group** of patients. The control group receives either no treatment or a placebo (“sham”) treatment.

What Measures Were Used to Determine Results?

The researchers used standard measure for back pain to assess the results.

According to the report, “the primary outcomes were pain, functional status and perceived recovery. Secondary outcomes were return-to-work and quality of life.”

What Were the Findings?

The review found that chiropractic is as effective as common medical interventions, such as painkillers, for chronic low-back pain. Findings also showed that chiropractic is extremely safe.

Because chiropractic is free of the hazardous potential adverse effects of medical interventions, these findings indicate that chiropractic is the perfect choice for patients with chronic low-back pain who want an all-natural approach.

What Will Be the Impact of the Review?

The study’s authors explain that the review will support the use of chiropractic care for CLBP.

“The effectiveness of this therapy has long been controversial,” says review lead author Dr. Sidney Rubinstein. “Some proponents are slowly starting to view it as effective for chronic low-back pain. The results of this review will support that view.”

“The decision to refer for manipulation should be based upon costs, preferences of the patient and providers, and relative safety of all treatment options,” adds Dr. Rubinstein.

Where Can I Access the Study?

The review, *Spineal manipulative therapy for chronic low-back pain*, may be viewed at the Cochrane Library’s Web site, www.thecochranelibrary.com. It was published in the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* in February 2011 in Issue 2 (*Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2011;2:CD008112).

What Previous Research Has Been Conducted on This Topic?

A growing body of research reveals the benefits of chiropractic care for CLBP.

For instance, one study included 30 patients who had suffered from low-

back pain for more than 12 weeks. They were all between the ages of 18 and 65. The researchers randomly assigned study participants to either medical treatment or chiropractic care.

Both groups began the study with the same levels of pain. However, the chiropractic group was on average a decade older and had suffered from CLBP for an average of three years longer.

Findings demonstrated that the chiropractic patients enjoyed significant improvement over the medical patients, for both reduction in disability as well as reduction in pain intensity. Considering the chiropractic patients were older and had suffered longer, these findings are even more momentous (*J Altern Complement Med* 2008;14:465-73).

In an editorial accompanying the study, Daniel Redwood, DC, of Cleveland Chiropractic College points out that “chiropractors currently confront an ingrained mindset on the part of many insurers and medical physicians who demand that courses of chiropractic care be limited in duration, recognizing little or no difference between acute and chronic cases. Doctors and insurers who would never consider limiting chronic pain patients to a 6-week course of prescription anti-inflammatory or analgesic medication in many cases do not hesitate to place such limits on chiropractic management of chronic back pain.”

Dr. Redwood urges that the findings will change these attitudes, and promote chiropractic as the most effective means of caring for patients with CLBP.

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