

Perspectives on Chiropractic and Immunity

Written by Scott Rosenthal, D.C., Matt McCoy, D.C. and Stamatis V. Tsamoutalidis, D.C.
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Louis Pasteur proposed the theory that germs cause disease. Very simply, the Germ Theory stated that there were separate diseases, and that each disease was caused by a particular microorganism. Today, we have discovered that the human body is 90 percent microbial, which means that our fear of germs is leading to catastrophic effects.

We know that symptoms are the body's efforts to balance and restore homeostasis. And yet, when symptoms arise, we all say it: "I'm sick." Too often these words become a call to action and today, more than ever, we are liable to actually damage ourselves with conventional practice. It is difficult to overcome the idea that we need an external chemical to achieve health. When we purchase decongestants for a stuffy nose, or medications for stomach pain, or when we put ointment on the rash and ingest fever suppressants to suppress a fever, we make a declaration that we know better than our physiology and we end up thwarting its normal function in the process.

It is interesting to note that as far back as the 1950s, B.J. Palmer, the developer of chiropractic, warned us about the use of antibiotics:

These products are so ill adapted to our organism that a certain number of individuals become intolerant of some and 'resist' others. Doctors cannot succeed in understanding why these medicines become ineffective and even provoke a serious advancement of the disease. It is because modern medicine finds its therapeutic means more and more in the retorts of chemists that it cares so little about physiological and endocrinological phenomena.

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CHIROPRACTIC FOR LIFE

PERSPECTIVES ON
**Chiropractic
and Immunity**

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The New Model
Contemporary scientists of Pasteur's time—Béchamp, Bernard, Virchow, and Metchnikoff—reached some different conclusions in their experiments. They discovered that it was not the microorganism that caused disease, but rather the health of the terrain that attracted these particular microorganisms and allowed them to proliferate.

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The New Model

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"I desired to know why one person was ailing and his associate, eating at the same table, working in the same shop, at the same bench, was not. Why? What difference was there in these two persons that caused one to have various diseases, while his partner escaped?"
— D.D. Palmer, Founder of Chiropractic

Salutogenesis

Mother Theresa stated that she would not participate in a march against war, but would participate if the march were for peace. Such a march would not only empower people to end war, but also help them move toward peace. In her view, the process of creating peace was different than merely ending war.

Salutogenesis is a term coined by Aaron Antonovsky, a professor of medical sociology. It describes a healthcare approach focusing on factors that support human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause disease. Salutogenesis starts by considering health, and looks prospectively at how to create, enhance, and improve physical, mental, and social well-being.

Salutogenesis is in contrast to pathogenesis, which is the study of disease origins and causes. Pathogenesis starts by considering disease and infirmity and then works to determine how individuals can avoid, manage, or eliminate that disease or infirmity. Pathogenesis is the approach taken by our country's current medical model of healthcare. Acceptance of the pathogenic model of health by most traditional health professionals has dictated that disease prevention, treatment, and management are the paths to better health. Just as common sense tells us that the absence of bad behavior does not indicate the presence of good behavior, research consistently demonstrates that simply decreasing a negative state does not necessarily increase positive states.

The presence of health requires more than just the absence of disease or related risk factors. The concepts and ideas related to salutogenesis are some of the factors that draw people to chiropractic.

During times of great epidemics and plagues, most people survived, even without any healthcare intervention— which is why we are all here. Many people have wondered why, instead of looking at those who have succumbed to a health issue or problem, we never looked at those that didn't have it to see what they were doing that kept them well. Why was the focus and research never on those that were doing things right?

While both pathogenesis and salutogenesis are necessary and important, if we focused on what makes people healthy, the need for treating disease would be greatly decreased. In

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fact, when people saw a chiropractor even as sporadically as once a month, some of the results they received included:

-

60.2 percent decrease in hospital admissions

-

59 percent decrease in hospital days

-

62 percent decrease in outpatient surgeries

-

85 percent decrease in pharmaceutical costs

Imagine just the healthcare cost savings if more people utilized chiropractic and used it properly. Now imagine the amazing benefits they would receive and how much more enjoyable life and our community would be.

Courage Over Fear

In their book *Trust Us, We're Experts*, John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton explain in great detail how public opinion on practically all subjects is programmed into our brains through the assiduous scientific efforts of the most sophisticated PR firms in history. These spin doctors specialize in the installation of certain opinions and values, and their primary tool is fear. Fear is their golden button, polished to perfection. Fear is how the "clever" keep the weak in line—fear of disease, fear of microorganisms, fear of the unknown. And they've made challenges to conventional wisdom politically incorrect.

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It has been said that fear is really an acronym for “False Evidence Appearing Real.” But when you know the truth, you need not fear anything. Chiropractic has brought something to the world that was once lost, namely, the confidence that the body is a self-healing organism that can solve its problems and more if given the opportunity to operate without restriction. The chiropractic lifestyle includes people who make up a very unique cross-section of society. They are people who have refused to be trained and have rediscovered the inner wisdom with which they were born. The training of society will go on, but as long as we have people who can still think for themselves and can tell others about this science called chiropractic, this movement will continue. So will our hope for a better world.

	PATHOGENESIS	SALUTOGENESIS
Starting point	Disease or problem	Health potential
Goal	Prevention and early detection	Maximize the expression of health potential
Works to	Eliminate risk factors	Create health factors
Perspective	Treat disease	Obtain health
Focus	Prevent pain or loss Keep from making situation worse Minimization of problems	Promote gains or growth Continuous improvement Optimization of potential
Motive	Fear	Empowerment
Delivery/Temporal Profile	Event/episodic	Process/lifetime
Outcome	Absence of problem	Presence of gain
-active	Re-active: React to signs, symptoms, and indications of disease	Pro-active: Create conditions of physical, mental, and social well-being
Practitioner Role	Dominant	Partner/coach

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Chiropractic and Immunity

The most important, common thread between midwives, holistic practitioners, and chiropractors has been this sincere and refreshing respect for achieving our potential through normal physiology. Their trust in the body's inherent wisdom to function as it is designed to is at the heart of salutogenesis and the future of healthcare.

Chiropractors have observed for years that patients under regular chiropractic care, regardless of age, report experiencing fewer infections. What is the physiology behind this? Why do patients insist on claiming this? What does the science say?

Spinal adjustments can have a positive effect on immune function, according to a growing number of researchers who are exploring the common denominators in disease processes, and the role of the nervous, immune, and hormonal systems in development of immune-related illnesses. Chiropractic adjustments reduce interference to the nervous system's ability to perform optimally. Since the nervous system controls all functions of the body—including the immune system—chiropractic care can have a positive effect on immune function. Dr. Christopher Kent, cofounder of the Vertebral Subluxation Foundation, reports:

Contemporary research is beginning to shed light on the neurobiological mechanisms, which may explain the outstanding clinical results chiropractors have experienced when managing patients with viral and infectious diseases.... A comprehensive review of the research literature reveals the current understanding that the brain and immune system are the two major adaptive systems in the body. During an immune response, the brain and the immune system "talk to each other" and this process is essential for maintaining homeostasis, or balance in the body.

Since its inception, chiropractic has asserted that viruses and microbes don't threaten us all equally, and that a healthy immune system easily repels most invaders. Dr. D.D. Palmer, the founder of chiropractic, explained it in 1910:

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The science of chiropractic has modified our views concerning life, death, health and disease. We no longer believe that disease is an entity, something foreign to the body, which may enter from without, and with which we have to grasp, struggle, fight and conquer, or submit and succumb to its ravages. Disease is a disturbed condition, not a thing of enmity. Disease is an abnormal performance of certain functions.

A functioning immune system protects us from infectious disease by providing adaptive measures to overcome the ill effects of bacteria and viruses. Our immune system, like every other system in the body, is coordinated and controlled by the nervous system. As winter approaches in the northern hemisphere, people are being reminded of the upcoming “dreaded flu season.” Drug advertisers barrage us with the message that the flu germs will attack us and we need the flu shot for protection. Many people doubt this conventional practice, asking how they can instead support their normal, natural immunity.

Chiropractors helping patients battle the flu is not a new occurrence. During the 1917–18 influenza epidemic, an estimated 20 million people died throughout the world, including about 500,000 Americans. It was chiropractic’s success in caring for flu victims that led to the profession’s licensure in many states. Researchers reported that in Davenport, Iowa, out of the 93,590 patients treated by medical doctors, there were 6,116 deaths— a loss of one patient out of every 15. Chiropractors at the Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport adjusted 1,635 cases of flu-stricken patients, with only one subsequent death. Outside Davenport, chiropractors in Iowa cared for 4,735 cases with only six deaths— one out of 866. During the same epidemic, in Oklahoma, out of 3,490 flu patients under chiropractic care, there were only 7 deaths. Furthermore, chiropractors were called in for 233 cases that were given up as lost by the medical establishment, and reportedly saved all but 25. In another report covering 4,193 cases by 213 chiropractors, 4,104 showed complete recovery.

“These results are not so surprising, given what we now know about the interaction between the nervous system and the immune system,” writes Matthew McCoy, D.C., M.P.H., editor of *The Journal of Pediatric, Maternal & Family Health—Chiropractic*. “Through research we know that chiropractic has beneficial effects on immunoglobulins, B-lymphocytes (white blood cells), pulmonary function and other immune system processes.” One such study, conducted by Patricia Brennan, Ph.D., and her team, found that when a chiropractic “manipulation” was applied to the middle back, the response of polymorphonuclear neutrophils (white blood cells) taken from blood collected 15 minutes after the manipulation was significantly higher than blood collected 15 minutes before the chiropractic procedure.

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This research demonstrated an “enhanced respiratory burst” following the chiropractic adjustment. This burst is needed for our immune cells to destroy invading viruses and bacteria.

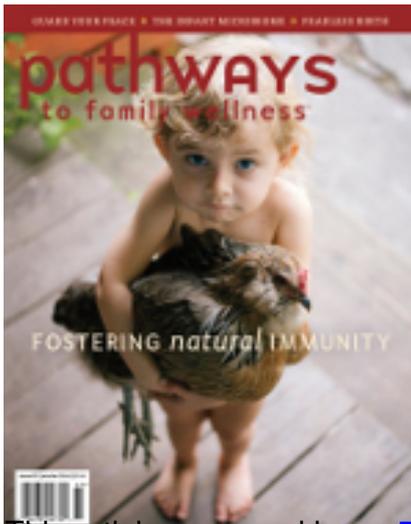
Another small study was conducted to study the effects of specific chiropractic adjustments on the immune systems of HIV-positive individuals. Over the six-month period of the study, the group that did not receive chiropractic care experienced a 7.96 percent decrease in CD4 cell counts; the adjusted group experienced a 48 percent increase in CD4 cell counts over the same period.

It is important to note that chiropractic is not the treatment of conditions. Treating disease is the practice of medicine. What distinguishes chiropractic from medicine is its emphasis on restoring function to the body by enhancing the performance of the nervous system. Chiropractic restores the integrity of the nervous system. When a vertebra subluxates (misaligns and interferes with nerve impulses), it inhibits the body from functioning optimally and results in a loss of health. The chiropractor regularly checks the spine to correct subluxations soon after they occur. This is the uniqueness of chiropractic. It is a service that no one else performs and is a necessary component of restoring well-being, which is starkly different from a diseasetreating approach.

Additionally, chiropractors understand the importance of things like nutrition and lifestyle, which are often neglected in conventional healthcare. Simple things like getting enough rest, drinking ample quantities of water, introducing more minerals through whole foods and vegetables, and reducing stress all have positive influences on our state of well-being, our nervous system, and our immune response. In the model of healthcare that honors normal physiology, these aspects and many others come together to form a harmonious whole.

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