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ATTITUDES TOWARD RESEARCH IN UNDERGRADUATE CHIROPRACTIC STUDENTS

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This paper, co-authored by the head of research (DN) at the McTimoney Chiropractic College (MCC) and the principal (CC) of the MCC, based in the United Kingdom, states that,

“The aim of this research is to investigate the current attitudes of chiropractic undergraduates to research and how it is taught.”

The authors begin the introduction to their paper by making a case for why such research is important. They contend that,

“A professions attitudes are as much formed by influences during undergraduate study as they are by subsequent professional experience. Indeed it could be argued that some of the most profound changes in attitude take place during a student’s undergraduate years. Furthermore, one might suggest, the educational experience should only be deemed a success if these changes actually take place.

It is suggested that,

“In the present climate of evidence-based medicine, a significant exposure to the methods, controversies and dilemmas inherent in health care research must be a central component of this experience.”

The introduction is drawn to a close by noting that,

“Colleges in the UK are at different stages in pursuit of this goal, some having developed sophisticated research expertise and professional funding, whilst others are at the developmental stage. The emergence of a research culture within the college community involves dual tracks of development. The first involves the college faculty The second involves the students... Their attitudes towards research, as a means of progressing the chiropractic cause, will depend heavily on their level of engagement.”

The authors report that the study, carried out amongst all (n=164) students at the MCC, utilised a questionnaire composed of 6 sections. Each section was evaluated using a 7-point numerical scale.

Results -

- ▣ A total of 119 students, representing 76% of the college population, completed the questionnaire.
- ▣ Seventy seven percent (77%) of the respondents have a previously obtained higher education qualification and 44% had had some experience with research.
- ▣ Sixty four percent (64%) thought research to be of interest.
- ▣ Seventy five percent (75%) consider chiropractic research to be necessary. ▣ The view of first year students was notably less positive towards research compared to final year students.
- ▣ Students in the later years of the MCC course perceived significantly less emphasis on research compared with early years.
- ▣ Significantly more positive attitudes were found in those undergraduates with previous research experience. This was most marked in the later years.

The authors interpret their findings as follows,

“This study shows that students feel research is an important part of the undergraduate course and for the profession at large. Further, students feel increasingly confident in engaging in research issues as the course progresses.”

In conclusion it is stated,

“The profession must be outward looking, knowledgeable and willing to incorporate evidence-based practice through its college educational programmes, as well as verify and preserve the best of its own health care paradigm.”

Reference: Newell D, Cunliffe C. Attitudes towards research in undergraduate chiropractic students. *Clinical Chiropractic* 2003; 6:109-19.