

Update 39

SATISFACTION WITH CHIROPRACTIC TREATMENT: WHAT ROLE DOES THE PHYSICAL OUTCOME PLAY?

The findings of this study, co-authored by Professor Alan Breen, the Director of the Institute for Musculoskeletal Research and Clinical Implementation at the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic, are extremely interesting.

This study sought to determine what outcomes had the most predictive value for overall satisfaction and improvement in patients seeking chiropractic care for low back pain.

Baseline questionnaires were completed by 965 patients seeking chiropractic help for low back pain, with blinded follow-up at 6 weeks. Patients were asked about effects on pain, anxiety, normal activity, work, depression, lifestyle, satisfaction, and overall improvement. Stepwise multiple regression analyses were used to evaluate the contribution of change scores to overall improvement and satisfaction.

The study found that there were weak to moderate, but highly significant, relationships between the change scores and both improvement and satisfaction. However, surprisingly, **pain, work, and ability to control pain** together predicted only **27%** of the variance in overall improvement. **This left 73% of the variance unexplained.**

The authors conclude that the nature of the "unknown" components needs further investigation. Moreover, the authors suggest that there are initial indications in the literature that **information giving**, and the **reconfiguration of patients' perceptions of the problem**, may contribute to patient satisfaction generally.

ASRF Update Editor's comments - In other words, in response to the question, "Satisfaction with chiropractic treatment: what role does the physical outcome play?", this study suggests the answer is "very little" because as much as 73% of the variance in patients' satisfaction with chiropractic care appears to be predicted by factors other than the physical outcome.

Reference: Breen A, Breen R. Back pain and satisfaction with chiropractic treatment: what role does the physical outcome play? Clin J Pain. 2003;19:263-8.

Note: For those of you who have not previously had to deal with the term 'variance', I'll attempt to give you a quick explanation but first you need to understand another term called 'The sum of squares' -

The sum of squares provides some indication of how closely scores stay to the mean. The sum of squares is calculated in 3 steps --

1. Take the difference between each score and the mean
2. Square each of these differences
3. Add these squared differences.

Variance is a measure of variability based on the sum of squares, which, unlike the sum of squares, corrects for having more scores. Variance corrects for having more scores, in the case where a researcher is attempting to estimate the population variance from a sample, by dividing the sum of squares by one less than the number of scores.