Chiropractic Update

Update 24

Spinal Adjusting versus Antimicrobial Therapy for Childhood Chronic Otitis Media

Whilst much has been written about the ineffectiveness of antimicrobial therapy for children with Chronic Otitis Media (COM), there now exists preliminary evidence that a course of chiropractic care can benefit those with COM. The authors, Joan Fallon and Joe Boyer, undertook the following controlled clinical trial to compare the effectiveness of a course of chiropractic care versus antimicrobial therapy amongst a group of age, sex and condition matched children with COM. Thirty children with COM, aged between 8-36 months, were assigned to one of two methods of care - Spinal adjusting or antimicrobial therapy. Each child had reportedly suffered a minimum of 3 ear infections within 60 days, with a history of no previous OM.

Three main outcome measures were monitored –

- **Overall health satisfaction** - [Each child was rated by their parents before, during and after care with respect to overall health – (1 – not satisfied, 2 – somewhat satisfied, 3 – moderately satisfied, 4 – satisfied, 5 – highly satisfied)].
- **Days 'til OM resolved.**
- **Recurrence rate within 60 days.**

The results in relation to each of the outcomes of interest were reported as follows:

- **Overall health satisfaction**: **2.27** (+ or – 1.1) for the antimicrobial group : **3.87** (+ or - .83) for the spinal adjustment group

- **Days to OM resolution**: **16.87** (mean), 7.47 (SD) for the antimicrobial group : **6.47** (mean), 2.1 (SD) for the spinal adjustment group

- **Recurrence rate**: After 60 days, was **46.7%** for the antimicrobial group : After 60 days, was **0%** for the spinal adjustment group

The authors conclude,

"The results suggest that there is a significant decrease in the number of days it takes to resolve COM using chiropractic care compared to one treated with antimicrobial therapy. Further, the recurrence rate of OM was lower in the chiropractic group, and patient/parent satisfaction was higher in the chiropractic group."

ASRF Chiropractic Update editor's comment: Even though the sample size for this controlled study was small, all three outcomes of interest suggest there was a significant difference between the two approaches. Although this was a controlled clinical trial, participants were not allocated to their respective intervention groups via randomisation. As a result the studies findings may have been influenced by a number of biases. A larger study population wherein patients are allocated via an acceptable method of randomisation would strengthen future attempts at similar studies.

Reference:

Fallon J, Boyer J. Effects of spinal adjusting versus the administration of antimicrobial therapy to children with Chronic Otitis Media. Proceedings [WFC's 7th Biennial Congress], Orlando, Florida, USA, May 1-3, 2003:315-16.