

# Chiropractic Update



## Update 25

### Further misuse of the term 'chiropractic'

Hello,

The following letter has just been published (on-line) with the British Medical Journal <http://bmj.com/cgi/eletters/326/7403/1353> (See below).

The letter relates to a case report that was published in a journal, called the Journal of Neurological and Neurosurgical Psychiatry, and the BMJ, which suggested that a chiropractor in Germany had caused a dural tear and intracranial hypotension whilst performing so called 'chiropractic manipulation' on a patient. I contacted both the President of the German Chiropractic Association and the lead author of the case report (a German Neurosurgeon) in order to clarify the qualifications and profession of the care provider involved -- It was not a chiropractor. It was a lay medical practitioner with only weekend course training in manipulation.

Please read my letter below, addressed to the BMJ editor, in order to better understand that chiropractic had nothing to do with this particular injury.

Regards,

Adrian Wenban Barcelona, Spain.

### Rapid responses to:

#### BMJ FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS:

Harvey Marcovitch (BMJ syndication editor)  
What's new this month in BMJ Journals:

**Chiropractic causes leak of CSF. BMJ 2003; 326: 1353 [Full text]**

### Rapid responses published:

#### Who caused the CSF leak?

Adrian B Wenban (16 August 2003)

To: Harvey Marcovitch  
BMJ syndication editor  
[h.marcovitch@btinternet.com](mailto:h.marcovitch@btinternet.com)

Dear Sir,

*I read with interest your brief review, in the section titled 'BMJ family highlights'(1), of a case report recently published in the Journal of Neurological and Neurosurgical Psychiatry(2). There appears to be a significant discrepancy between your brief review, which you title 'Chiropractic causes leak of CSF', and the original case report, which Beck et al. titled 'Intracranial hypotension after chiropractic manipulation of the cervical spine'.*

*Your brief review states, 'A chiropractor manipulated the spine of a 40 year old women .....', whereas the original case report by Beck et al., states, 'A 40 year old women undertook a spinal chiropractic manipulation. The chiropractitioner .....*

*Your review uses the word 'chiropractor' instead of 'chiropractitioner' and in doing so suggests you assume that, in Germany, from where the case report originates, a chiropractor and a chiropractitioner are one and the same. However this is not the case. An individual in Germany using the title chiropractor will have successfully completed a course of study, usually of a minimum of 5 years duration, at a college/university accredited by the European Council of Chiropractic Education (ECCE). On the other hand, a chiropractitioner usually has no formal qualification in chiropractic and at most may have completed a series of weekend seminars(3).*

*A number of members of the German Chiropractic Association and I have personally contacted the lead author of the original case study to which this letter, and your brief review, pertain. The lead author, Dr. Beck, from the Department of Neurosurgery Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University, Frankfurt, confirmed that it was not a qualified chiropractor that had 'manipulated' the spine of the patient involved. Moreover, Dr. Beck described the individual involved as a 'lay medical practitioner'(also called a Heilpraktiker)(4).*

*It has previously been reported in the medical literature that the terms chiropractic and chiropractor have often been inappropriately applied to therapists, who were not chiropractors, when the care they provided resulted in complications(5). More specifically Terrett has stated,*

*"The words chiropractic and chiropractor have been incorrectly used in numerous publications dealing with SMT [spinal manipulative therapy] injury, by medical authors, respected medical journals, and medical organizations. In many cases this is not accidental, as the authors had access to original reports, which identified the practitioner involved as other than a chiropractor."*

*In summary, your brief review, and the original case report, are misleading. The intervention to which Dr. Beck's case study, and your brief review, relates was not a 'chiropractic manipulation', was not delivered by a 'chiropractor', and therefore in no way involved 'chiropractic'. Sadly, it appears as though the terms chiropractic and chiropractor have again been misused. Given the above, it would seem appropriate to change the titles of both your brief summary and Dr. Beck's case report. I wonder, had the care provider been a qualified medical practitioner, instead of just a lay medical practitioner, would you have treated all medicine with as much disregard, as you did all chiropractic, and titled your brief summary 'Medicine causes leak of CSF? I suspect not.*

*Sincerely,*

*Adrian Wenban, B.Sc., B.App.Sc., M.Med.Sc.  
Associate Governor, Australian Spinal Research Foundation.  
Education Committee, Spanish Chiropractic Association.  
Barcelona, Spain.*

## References:

1. Chiropractic causes leak of CSF. *BMJ* 2003;326:1353.
2. Beck J, Raabe A, Seifert V, Dettmann E. Intracranial hypotension after chiropractic manipulation of the cervical spine. *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 2003;74:821-2.
3. Personal communication from President, German Chiropractic Association.
4. Personal communication from lead author of original case report, Dr. Beck.
5. Terrett AG. Misuse of the literature by medical authors in discussing spinal manipulative therapy injury. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1995;18:203-10.

Competing interests: None declared