

Update 4

Chiropractic Adjustments May Help Resolve Infant Skull Flattening

The Chiropractic Journal of Australia recently published a preliminary study by Dr. Neil Davies (CJA 2002; 32:52-5), that describes the chiropractic care given to 25 infants who were each suffering from a flattening of the back of the head.

It was traditionally thought that infants sometimes develop a flattening of the back of the head when they sleep on their back, as is now widely recommended because of the increased risk of SIDS when sleeping face down. However, more recent research has shown that problems with neck function can also cause head flattening.

Infant head flattening is of particular importance because it seems to put infants at increased risk of developmental delay, which Dr. Davies informs us, may result in learning difficulties during a child's schooling.

The stated objective of Dr. Davies' study was to compare the rate of resolution of head flattening in those infants under chiropractic care to the rate of resolution that occurs through natural history and another type of treatment called 'device-dependent therapy'.

The results suggest that all 25 patients in the study, each of whom received chiropractic care mostly focused on the neck, achieved complete resolution of their head flattening in a mean time of 3.64 months. Furthermore, the mean number of adjustments required for this 100% success was only 1.8.

The author concludes that the early implementation of chiropractic care for infants with head flattening may play a critical role in reducing learning problems in these infants once they get to school-age.

Dr. Davies deserves to be applauded for his efforts in publishing this preliminary study concerned with the chiropractic management of head flattening in infants. Documenting changes in relation to subluxation correction is of paramount importance if we are to fully appreciate the extent to which chiropractic care is useful in diverse patient populations. Our failure to do so may also have adverse consequences for patient's universal access to chiropractic care.

Overall, like many preliminary studies, Dr. Davies' case series raises a good many more questions than it is able to answer. But that is exactly what you would expect of an interesting and clinically relevant case series. Thank you for your publication Dr. Davies.