Runs on the Board

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A central long-term goal of the Australian Spinal Research Foundation is to:

"Be the research foundation which demonstrates that subluxation based chiropractic care improves quality of life and human performance."

In advancing towards this goal, we are exploring the ways in which we can support chiropractic research in a more substantial way than ever before. This involves continuing to fund research of course, but also involves helping to grow the research community.

- Ultimately, we need within our profession, a viable and attractive career path for those who have an aptitude for research. We must nurture researchers to come from and be immersed in the same chiropractic world inhabited by practitioners.
- We must evolve our understanding of the canvass upon which the diverse initiatives of subluxation-focused research can be painted, in order to gain a greater understanding of the whole, and potentially direct further initiatives.
  We need to grow our funding capacity to increase our output and thereby accelerate the expansion of our influence.

These requirements go hand in hand with a focusing of the funding towards research initiatives which will contribute towards the substantiation of the vertebral subluxation hypothesis – a path we have taken for a number of years now. In the December TAC, the latest research projects we funded were listed. The titles of those projects really give you little idea of what they are about. To gain an understanding, I refer you to our recent Summer 2008 newsletter which expands on them. I believe it is the most exciting group of research projects ever funded by the ASRF, and their potential impact is enormous.

There are also significant 'runs on the board' so to speak, in terms of research that has already been published. Two of the researchers to obtain a grant this year, Dr Heidi Haavik Taylor and Dr Bernadette Murphy, authored a paper published last year *Clinical Neurophysiology 2007 Feb;118(2):391-402* which, for the first time, recorded and identified changes occurring in brain function following chiropractic adjustments. This paper is nothing short of ground-breaking. Somatosensory evoked potentials were recorded pre and post adjustment, the results showing significant changes. The authors proposed the following:

"Given that spinal dysfunction would alter the balance of afferent input to the CNS we propose that this altered afferent input may over time lead to potential maladaptive neural plastic changes in the CNS."

The study then goes on to show persistent changes in somatosensory processing and sensorimotor integration following adjustments by chiropractors, leading the authors to conclude:

"Spinal manipulation of dysfunctional cervical joints can lead to transient cortical plastic changes, as demonstrated by attenuation of cortical somatosensory evoked responses."

Many other researchers are doing work to demonstrate the effects of chiropractic care on more peripheral parts of the nervous system and body. Others in our profession such as Drs Dan Murphy, Malik Slosberg and James Chestnut collate research which, when looked at through a chiropractic lens, supports our hypothesis.

Dr Haavik Taylor and Dr Murphy, however, have demonstrated direct evidence at the brain level, which is a huge step forward. It is also just the beginning. As the technology available to measure brain function expands, the possibilities for chiropractic research grow as well. An example being these same two researchers having gone on to use EEG studies to measure brain activity with chiropractic care, another first. *Haavik Taylor H and Murphy B. (2007). World Federation of Chiropractic's 9th Biennial Congress Award Winning Paper (3rd Prize): Altered sensorimotor integration with cervical spine manipulation. JMPT, in press.*

These two papers are an exciting example of the support of research by the chiropractic community bearing fruit. Yet what is more exciting is that this is just the tip of the iceberg. An iceberg that will take a lot of work, commitment to vision, and further support to uncover, but one that will realize the goal stated at the top of this page.

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