



WORLD FEDERATION OF | FÉDÉRATION MONDIALE DE | FEDERACIÓN MUNDIAL DE
CHIROPRACTIC | CHIROPRACTIQUE | QUIROPRÁCTICA

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PRESS RELEASE

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Statement in response to recent media focus on cervical artery dissection, stroke and cervical spine manipulation.

The World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) is sorry to learn from recent media reports in United States of a young woman having suffered a vascular incident after visiting a chiropractor. Cervical artery dissection (CAD) and related strokes can have devastating consequences for patients and their loved ones and our thoughts go to everyone associated with this distressing and traumatic incident.

While it would be inappropriate for the WFC to comment on an individual case when many of the facts are unknown, such distressing news reminds us of how important it is for clinicians and patients to review what we currently know about CAD. Briefly, CAD accounts for less than 2% of all stroke cases, an extremely uncommon condition with an annual incidence rate of between 1 and 3 per 100,000 people.

On rare occasions, CAD has been reported to have occurred after a patient visited a chiropractor or other provider of manual therapy. However, the best evidence available to date indicates that spinal manipulation does not stress the arteries enough to cause tearing of the arteries leading to dissection-related strokes. Additional studies have concluded that patients are as likely to have consulted a primary care physician as receive spinal manipulation from a chiropractor prior to experiencing a CAD-related stroke.

The symptoms of a CAD in progress – including neck pain and headaches – often mimic those of mechanical neck pain, conditions for which patients routinely seek assistance from a healthcare provider. Patients with neck pain are more likely to have CAD than those who do not, and patients with neck pain are more likely to visit chiropractors than those who do not. Up to 12% of adults in the United States visit chiropractors each year for successful treatment of neck pain and headache symptoms

The provision of safe, high-quality, evidence-based, patient-centered care for these and other conditions is a priority for the chiropractic profession. Rigorous research is core to the pursuit of that objective. We urge caution in making claims that are in conflict with the current state of the evidence.

About the WFC

The World Federation of Chiropractic is an international, non-governmental organization whose members are the national associations of over 90 countries in seven world regions. It is a non-state actor in official relations with the World Health Organization and is the global authority for matters related to the chiropractic profession.

About chiropractic

Chiropractic is a primary, portal-of-entry healthcare profession that is principally concerned with the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and management of spine and musculoskeletal disorders and the impact of these disorders on the nervous system and on general health. Chiropractors are highly trained and undergo a minimum of four years of university-level education. The profession is regulated in over 40 countries around the world, where chiropractors are required to undertake continuing professional education in order to keep up to date and stay abreast of current evidence. Although best known as providers of manual therapy, including spinal and joint manipulation, chiropractors are trained in rehabilitation and use a range of techniques, including lifestyle advice and patient education, as part of their management strategies. They frequently work with other health and care providers in interprofessional settings and provide community- and institution-based treatment to patients across the life course.

References

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