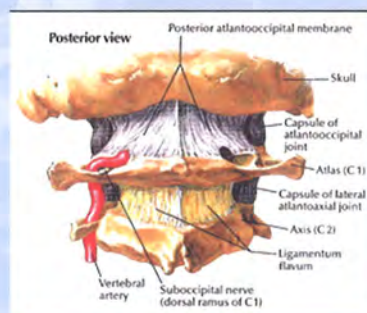


## CHIROPRACTIC INJURIES

Cervical Manipulation or neck adjustment techniques employed by chiropractors can be unreasonably dangerous, with the devastating consequence of stroke. A neck adjustment by a chiropractor can cause a dissection of the vertebral or the carotid artery, resulting in a stroke. While the first mild signs of a stroke can occur before the patient leaves the office of the chiropractor, a stroke is more likely to occur well after the chiropractic neck adjustment, perhaps hours, days or weeks after the chiropractor has manipulated the neck. Sometimes the tear is a small one and it clots over; then days later the clot breaks loose, travels to the brain and causes a delayed stroke. By this time, the patient may not connect his sudden collapse to the previous visit to the chiropractor. Chiropractors often times will tell patients that the stroke signs they may experience are just the body releasing toxins instead of telling their patients to get immediate emergency care.

A chiropractic neck manipulation may also crush an artery, or can escalate a pre-existing condition into a full blown stroke as when it dislodges an existing, possibly unknown, embolus. When this happens the symptoms of a stroke may occur much sooner.



The highest neck area is very different from the five cervical vertebrae (illustration on right).

Of particular concern is that the vertebral arteries in the back of the neck make a very sharp 90 degree turn as they pass from the top vertebrae to supply the most vital areas of the brain.

Cervical manipulation can cause damage to these arteries and lead directly to a stroke or even death.

Chiropractors are well aware of the risk. They discuss it in their journals, on-line forums and in their college textbooks. It is talked about in countries all over the world. In the UK, New Zealand, Canada, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Australia.... there are thousands of chiropractic stroke victims. Many chiropractors will argue that patients who have existing compromised or torn arteries are the patients who have the strokes. If that is the case, then they should not be manipulating any patients' neck who come to them with headache, neck pain or whiplash etc.

Chiropractors therefore have tried to find ways to screen patients for high risk, but admit there is no reliable way to do so. Merely taking a patient's history does not detect cervical injury.

***“Currently, no simple and inexpensive screening test exists that can reliably determine if a patient’s neck symptoms are being caused by a vertebral artery dissection or a much more common cause such as muscular tightness or joint stiffness.”***

- William J. Lauretti, D.C., American Chiropractic Association Spokesman

## INFORMED CONSENT

**Informed Consent** in the U.S. requires medical professionals to disclose significant risks to their patients and chiropractors should be held to this same standard regarding the possibility of stroke caused by neck manipulation. Due to the fact that a person could have a stroke with their first neck manipulation or their 500th, informed consent should be provided every time a neck manipulation is performed.

Since it would be unrealistic to expect that every chiropractic patient will refuse a neck manipulation, all chiropractors should be mandated to not only warn their patients about the possibility of stroke, but also hand each patient a "after-care instructions" to take home with them. It would have the signs of stroke on it and instructions telling them that if they experience any of these stroke signs hours, days, or even weeks after the adjustment, they are to seek immediate emergency care. With stroke, time is of the essence and the sooner that one gets medical attention and gets treated for stroke, the quicker the recovery, the less permanent damage will occur and the less likelihood of death.



**People have the right to know there is a risk of stroke with a chiropractic manipulation.**

Hartford Courant  
Editorial Cartoon  
January 6, 2010

There has been no scientific study done to date by either medical professionals or chiropractors that has been able to cite just how often stroke may occur after a chiropractic manipulation, due to the delay of symptoms. Most chiropractors feel that it is a rare occurrence and that patients do not need to know the risk because it may scare them away from chiropractic treatment. However, it is the SEVERITY of the injury that is important, and not the RARITY of its occurrence. Chiropractic manipulation has also never been scientifically proven to have any long term benefit, advantage over other treatments, or to be any more beneficial than a placebo effect. If this is so, then isn't any degree of risk too much, especially if that risk could be a stroke which could lead to permanent disability and even death? ? ?

**Best Advice; Don't let a chiropractor "crack" or even touch your neck. It is just not worth the risk.**

"...because even ONE cerebral vascular incident that could have been prevented or detected is ONE TOO MANY." - Louis Sportelli, Chiropractor, President of NCMIC, a National Chiropractic Insurance Co.

## STROKE AWARENESS

### What is a Stroke?

Stroke is a disease that affects the arteries leading to and within the brain. It is the number 4 cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the U.S. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood (and oxygen) it needs, so it starts to die.

### What is a Chiropractic Stroke?

A chiropractic cervical manipulation (CM) or adjustment can tear a carotid or vertebral artery leading to the brain. As a result, a blood clot forms which eventually breaks off causing lack of blood flow to some part of the brain. A CM can also crush an artery or dislodge an already existing embolus causing a lack of vital blood flow to the brain.

When a chiropractic cervical manipulation tears an artery, it may take hours, days, even weeks for stroke symptoms to appear. This is why it is so important that a patient is aware of the signs of a stroke before agreeing to undergo a chiropractic neck adjustment.

### Signs of a Stroke

- Sudden numbness or weakness in face, arms or legs, esp. on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble walking or dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

#### Uncontrollable Risk Factors for Stroke

Age, Race, Gender  
Family History  
Previous Stroke or TIA

#### Controllable Risk Factors for Stroke

High Blood Pressure, High Cholesterol, Atrial Fibrillation, Diabetes, Cigarette Smoking, Chiropractic Cervical Manipulation, Artery or other Heart Disease, Poor Diet, Inactivity