



National MS Society Information Sourcebook

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Chiropractic Therapy

Chiropractic was developed in the 19th century by Daniel David Palmer in order to restore hearing in a patient. Palmer believed that a displaced vertebra was applying extra pressure on a nerve in the man's ear, resulting in a loss of hearing. The name chiropractic comes from the Greek *cheiro*, meaning hand and *praktō* meaning to use. The basic assumption of chiropractic is that vertebrae that are not in alignment apply pressure to near-by nerves. This pressure causes pain and/or dysfunction in the organs or muscles that are served by those nerves.

The goal of chiropractic therapy is to restore normal function to joints and their supporting structure, especially the vertebral column and pelvis. Following a simple examination and, often, radiological evaluation, the chiropractic practitioner applies precise adjustment to the vertebral column in order to bring structures back into alignment. This realignment is supposed to eliminate the irritation to the nerves and restore normal function. Pain is said to be relieved.

The most important question is how effective is chiropractic. Does treatment work? There is little to no incontrovertible evidence that chiropractic works. There is ample anecdotal testimony that chiropractic is effective. According to an editorial in *New England Journal of Medicine* (Shakelle PG (1998); **339(15)**: 1074-1075), treatment may be most effective in the case of lower back pain. There is less evidence for the use of chiropractic for neck pain and headaches.

Is chiropractic effective in the management of MS? There is no evidence to suggest that chiropractic can alter the underlying disease process or the disease course. While there is anecdotal evidence that people with MS have experienced relief of some of their symptoms, there are no controlled clinical trials demonstrating treatment safety or efficacy. This means that if individuals with MS experience lower back pain, which may or may not be related to MS, they may choose to see a chiropractor for treatment, after consulting with their MS physician. They may experience relief from the discomfort, but should not expect that the chiropractic will alter or slow the disease course.

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See also...

Sourcebook

- Acupuncture
- Complementary And Alternative Medicine
- Pain

Society Web Resources

- Spotlight: Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM)
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- Spotlight: MS and Pain
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- Treatments
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Clinical Bulletins for Healthcare Professionals

- Complementary and Alternative Medicine in MS
www.nationalmssociety.org/ClinicalBulletins

Book

Bowling A. *Alternative Medicine and Multiple Sclerosis*. New York: Demos Medical Publishing, 2001.

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is proud to be a source of information about multiple sclerosis. Our comments are based on professional advice, published experience, and expert opinion, but do not represent individual therapeutic recommendations or prescription. For specific information and advice, consult your personal physician.

To contact your chapter, call **1-800-FIGHT-MS** (1-800-344-4867) or visit the National MS Society web site: www.nationalmssociety.org.

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