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IS CERVICAL MANIPULATION CONTRAINDICATED DUE TO RISK OF STROKE?

One chiropractic IME doctor in Arizona has recently opined that “manipulation of the neck is contraindicated because of the risk of stroke.” The following is a detailed rebuttal of that position, written by Anthony L. Rosner, Ph.D., LL.D.[Hon.], Director of Research and Education, Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research, and published in *Dynamic Chiropractic*, v. 22, # 11, 2004 (if you want a complete copy of the Rosner article, send an email request to aimmerman1@cox.net):

“4. Actual Risks of Manipulation:

More definitive studies than the ones cited by Long which address the frequency of cerebrovascular accidents [VAs] actually have informed us that their actual occurrence is 5-10 per 10 million adjustments.¹⁶ A more recent Canadian study suggests that the occurrence rate of serious cerebrovascular accidents is less than 1/5 the previous rate, or 1 per 5.85 million adjustments.¹⁷

Risks are inherent in every medical procedure or lifestyle activity that we encounter. In terms of interventions of the spine, chiropractic has been shown to be many orders of magnitude *safer* than medication or surgery.

Assuming that each patient receives an average of 10 manipulations in treatment,¹⁸ death rates following cervical manipulation calculate to anywhere between *1/100-1/400* the rates seen in the use of NSAIDs for the same condition.^{19,20} Death rates from lumbar spine operations have been reported to be 300 times higher than the rate produced by cerebrovascular accidents in spinal manipulation;^{21,22} for cervical surgeries, recent death rates have been estimated to be *700-fold* greater.²¹ As Rome has pointed out,²³ risks for "virtually all" medical procedures ranging from the taking of blood samples,²⁴ use of vitamins,²⁵ drugs,²⁵ "natural" medications,²⁶ and vaccinations²⁷ are routinely accepted by the public as a matter of course.”

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