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SPINAL MANIPULATION DOES WORK: THE FACTS FROM THE BCA

The **British Chiropractic Association** (BCA) is outraged by recent claims made by Professor Ernst in a study* published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine. The BCA believes that the study was created using carefully selected, negative articles, in support of a pre-determined conclusion, and that this research was biased from the outset.

The BCA strongly maintains that **chiropractic is a safe and effective form of treatment** and finds numerous faults with Ernst's latest attack on the well-established chiropractic community.

The study was flawed for a number of reasons:

- In the main, the co-author (Ernst) only selected 16 research studies, out of a possible 60-70. A quarter (25%) of these selected studies were by the report's own author, adding even more bias to the results
- Elements of 'spin' exist within the context of the research – making reference to 'no evidence that SM is superior to other standard treatments' can actually be translated, as SM is just as effective as other standard treatments
- The study cited that 16,000 chiropractors were practising in the UK, in fact there are just 2,200 chiropractors in the UK, all of whom are regulated by the General Chiropractic Council
- The original reviews were not reported in full, leaving a great deal to the authors' own interpretation. A report prepared for the NHS National electronic Library for Health (NeLH) by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, based at the University of York, has already stated, "The reliability of the authors' conclusions cannot be fully assessed" because "insufficient details of the methodological robustness of the reviews included in the systematic review were provided. In addition, few details relating to the quality or the results of the primary studies included in the original reviews were reported".

Chiropractic is a mature profession, and numerous studies exist which clearly demonstrate that chiropractic treatment, including manipulative and spinal adjustment, is both safe and effective. The profession has always adopted a responsible attitude to research, and has never laid claims that manipulation is the cure for conditions such as asthma and colic but there have been instances where these conditions appear to have been benefited from chiropractic treatment. More so chiropractors should be congratulated for carrying out studies, which actively explore the scope of the treatment for such conditions.

In recent years, there have been three Medical Research Council funded research projects with results published in the BMJ. All clearly demonstrate the efficacy and cost effectiveness of the chiropractic management of back pain.

Barry Lewis, BCA President comments: "The vast majority of chiropractic patients are suffering from lower back pain or neck pain. When it comes to back pain, there is no single treatment that has been researched more than chiropractic. No other treatment methodology has come under as much scrutiny, and the recent UK BEAM

trial demonstrates that the 'package of care' chiropractic offers compares more than favourably with GP 'best practice'."

Existing research which Ernst failed to include within the 'systematic review' include:

- UK Beam Trial; Back pain, exercise and manipulation (UK BEAM) randomised trial: effectiveness of physical treatments for back pain in primary care. 2004
- Medical Research Council; 'Low Back pain of mechanical origin: randomised comparison of Chiropractic from hospital outpatient treatment'; Meade et al. 1990
- Medical Research Council (Follow-up-study) Trial 'Randomised comparison of Chiropractic and hospital outpatient management for low back pain; results from extended follow up'; Meade et al. 1995
- RCGP - Clinical Guidelines for the Management of Acute Low Back Pain (1996, 1999, 2001)
- Clinical Standards Advisory Group; Backpain Report 1994.
- Acute Back Pain - Primary Care Project; The Wiltshire and Bath Health Commission.
- Carter JT, Birrell LN (Editors) 2000. Occupational health guidelines for the management of low back pain at work - principal recommendations.
- Chiropractic Treatment in Workers with Musculoskeletal Complaints; Mark P Blokland DC et al; Journal of the Neuromusculoskeletal System
- House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology report on Complementary and Alternative Medicine November 2000

BCA chiropractors see tens of thousands of patients each day and they provide a safe and effective form of treatment that keeps people of all ages healthy and happy:

- Ex England star and rugby player, Austin Healey: *"I am aware of recent claims that manipulation doesn't work. I couldn't disagree more. Chiropractic treatment plays an important part in keeping me at the top of my game."*
- Paul Clifton, BBC correspondent *"I had a longstanding back injury and I have not the slightest doubt that chiropractic has enabled me to lead a normal life. As a cameraman and correspondent, carrying heavy equipment and traveling are part of my day to day life, without chiropractic treatment I certainly could not do the job I do."*

Professor Ernst has a track record of disparaging not only the chiropractic profession but also other similarly regulated healthcare professions. Ernst and Canter have carefully selected negative articles in support of their conclusion that manipulation cannot be recommended as a treatment when national clinical practice guidelines, based on much more and better research than the studies this article has selected, has come to exactly the opposite conclusion.

To arrange an interview with a BCA chiropractor, obtain details of the aforementioned research or for details of case studies. Call: Julie Doyle, icas PR 020 7632 2407 (office hours) or 07920 528 859

**A systematic review of systematic reviews of spinal manipulation. Ernst E, Canter PH. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine Vol 20 April 2006, pp189-193.*

Notes to Editors

BCA chiropractors see tens of thousands of patients each day and are able to provide a safe and effective form of treatment that keeps people of all ages healthy and happy.

The BCA represents well over 50% of UK chiropractors, with over 1200 practising members. Members of the BCA abide by a strict code of ethics and the association only accepts graduates who have gone through a minimum four-year full-time internationally accredited degree course at an internationally recognised college of chiropractic education. There are two fully UK and Internationally accredited education institutions in the UK; the Anglo European College of Chiropractic (AECC) and Welsh Institute of Chiropractic at the University of Glamorgan (WIOC).

In common with other health professions, chiropractic is regulated by Act of Parliament in the United Kingdom. The Chiropractors Act 1994 is a good example of modern legislation and it gives strong powers to the regulatory body, the General Chiropractic Council (www.gcc-uk.org) The GCC's main responsibilities are to: protect patients; set standards of conduct, practice and education; develop and promote the practice of chiropractic. The BCA ensures its chiropractors maintain high standards of conduct, practice, education and training within the profession and throughout their careers.

Chiropractic care offers hands on pain management and focuses on muscles, joints and nerves. Chiropractic is suitable for all ages and can help with a wide range of aches and pains from head to toe. Chiropractors use their hands to 'adjust' or 'manipulate' the spine and joints where signs of restriction in movement are found and can also involve working on muscles. This restores normal function to the affected muscles, joints and nerves allowing the body to then get on with the job of healing itself.

To find out more information about the BCA please visit www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk or call 0118 950 5950