

# In Touch

Keeping you In Touch  
with what's happening  
in the world of  
Health Care

Vol. 9, No. 6

June 2005

ISSN 1525-416X

## ■ Loss of normal neck curve increases risk of neck pain

A study in the March/April 2005 issue of the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* finds that the more a person loses the normal, forward curve in the neck, the more likely they are to suffer from neck pain and related problems.

In the study, researchers examined 277 random records of patients from an Australian chiropractic college clinic. The patients' x-ray films were measured for the amount of neck curve and how far forward their head was misaligned over the normal balance point. The films were then correlated with their symptomatic complaints at the time they began chiropractic care. After the data from the x-rays and files were collected, they were sorted by age, sex, and the amount of curve and forward head shift that were measured.

The researchers found that patients with a straight or reversed curve in the neck were 18 times more likely to experience neck pain and related problems.

They also found that the more a patient's head had shifted forward, the more likely they would experience neck pain and related problems.

Patients whose neck curves were within the normal range experienced statistically insignificant amounts of neck pain and were considered clinically normal. The patients' age or sex played no part in the outcome of the study.

Commentary: Past medical researchers have shown that a small number of people with reversed, misaligned neck curves experienced no pain or related symptoms. Unfortunately, this led them to conclude that loss of the

normal, forward neck curve was a normal variant that should not be considered a problem.

Along with other chiropractic research, this study shows that just because a small percentage of people with loss of normal curve don't have symptoms, we should not assume this is no big deal. Anytime the spine becomes misaligned, wide-ranging functional problems can and do develop. Your chiropractor's goal is to restore proper alignment and help you maintain the highest level of function possible. ▲

## ■ Antidepressants linked to abdominal bleeding

Various wire services reported on May 16, 2005 on a study that was presented at *Digestive Disease Week 2005*, a gastroenterologists convention in Chicago. The study found that people taking antidepressants such as Paxil, Zoloft and Prozac experience an increased risk of abdominal bleeding.

The concern is about the class of drugs known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) which keep the body from reabsorbing serotonin, a chemical that helps brain cells communicate with each other.

Normally, platelets in the blood need to absorb serotonin to allow normal clotting to occur. The researchers found that SSRIs can cause abdominal bleeding because they interfere with the blood platelets ability to absorb serotonin.

Lead researcher Dr. Michael Jones of the Northwestern University Medical School says "we found the overall risk for gastrointestinal hemorrhage for SSRIs was almost double, compared with control subjects." He goes on to

—continued

“To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.”

—Bertrand Russell

This Newsletter Compliments of: Timothy Knight, DC  
90 Lowell St., Arlington (781) 641-2510  
100 Fessenden St., Newton (617) 965-2510  
[www.dr.timknight.com](http://www.dr.timknight.com)

say, "the risk appears to extend not just to bleeding in the upper GI tract, but in the lower GI tract as well."

Similar risks have been found with the use of NSAIDs, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen. The researchers are worried that patients taking SSRIs might also be taking other drugs such as NSAIDs, blood thinners or other drugs that may compound the bleeding problem. ▲

## ■ Episiotomies increase pain, complications

The May 4, 2005 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reports that a review of 26 research studies shows that women who have episiotomies during childbirth have a higher risk of injury, more pain and more trouble healing.

An episiotomy is a cut in the outer vaginal wall to enlarge the vaginal opening during childbirth. For years it was believed that the procedure would improve women's sex lives and help them avoid incontinence after childbirth. It was also thought to prevent tearing of the vaginal wall that was harder to repair.

This study proves all of those beliefs wrong. It shows the procedure does not improve women's sex lives, increase pelvic floor strength or have any effect on incontinence. In fact, episiotomies are linked with a higher incidence of injury, pain and slower healing times.

Lead researcher, Dr. Katherine Hartmann, of the University of North Carolina, says, "This review puts together in one place all the evidence that we're not getting the results we want." She goes on to add that even though rates are dropping, they are not dropping fast

enough. She estimates that 1 million women per year have unnecessary episiotomies, being performed in about 30 percent of vaginal births.

In 1983 the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said episiotomies should not be routinely performed. ▲

## ■ Medical errors worsening

A May 2, 2005 report issued from Colorado-based *Health Grades Inc.* finds that deaths from medical errors, particularly those from hospital acquired infections, are on the increase even though the problem is much more recognized than in previous years.

According to the report, "Hospital-acquired infection rates worsened by approximately 20 percent from 2000 to 2003 and accounted for 9552 deaths and \$2.6 billion, almost 30 percent of the total excess cost related to the patient safety incidents."

The report found that more than 300,000 patients died after experiencing some kind of hospital-related incident between 2001-2003. More than 80 percent of those deaths could be directly attributed to the incident.

A hospital's infection rate "correlated most highly with overall performance...suggesting that hospital-acquired infection rates could be used as a proxy of overall hospital patient safety."

"For patients, it's important to know which hospitals meet this standard, as they are nearly 200 percent less likely to have an incident at hospitals in the top 10 percent." ▲

---

# *Chiropractic Care Keeps The Whole Family Healthy!*

---

*This Newsletter Compliments of: Timothy Knight, DC*

90 Lowell St., Arlington (781) 641-2510  
100 Fessenden St., Newton (617) 965-2510  
[www.drtyimknight.com](http://www.drtyimknight.com)