

Evidence based chiropractic education: A student's perspective

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Narrative: Students, particularly those with an intimate experience of the power of Chiropractic in their own lives, find an educational environment challenging when it is built on denial of the subluxation.

Rather than attempting to gain political favour by teaching a poor version of Chiropractic as 'chiropractic medicine' institutions must start acting responsibly with rigorous research into why it is that conventional Chiropractors consistently achieve positive patient outcomes through subluxation-focussed patient care.

Indexing Terms: Chiropractic; education; curriculum; evidence based practice.

Introduction

Since childhood I was immersed and intrigued with expanding my knowledge of human anatomical and physiological processes. My mother Keila Nichols DC, who has been practicing chiropractic for the past 35 years and [has published in these pages](#), was able to both maintain a functioning chiropractic practice out of our home and find time to also homeschool her 4 children. I was able to watch many patients crawl in the front door and then walk back out to their cars 30 minutes later. From a young age, I wanted to learn this 'magic' that could heal so effectively and clearly.

As I continued through high school, I was fascinating to learn more and more about what my mother was doing to help her patients heal as well as the philosophy that flows beneath and throughout the art of chiropractic. So I launched into the necessary undergraduate chiropractic college prerequisite classes with zeal and finally was able to enrol in a chiropractic college.

You can imagine my building confusion and dismay early in college to hear professors say:

- ▶ *'Don't even get me started on leg-length analysis. There are so many things wrong with that and it should never be trusted'*
- ▶ *'When we adjust, we are never moving bones. We are simply just stretching golgi tendon organs'*

... I want to create 'magic' in the lives of my patients through the practise of responsible, conventional Chiropractic ...'



- ▶ *'The chiropractic adjustment does not impart neurological influence into the system and cannot affect organs let alone hormonal function'*
- ▶ *'Chiropractic adjustments are not the treatments that will heal your patients, it is the physical therapy exercises'*

Throughout my education, a single strand has been woven throughout just about every class I have taken: *'Evidence Based Practice'*. I learned that the chiropractic techniques I had seen produce such potent results in my childhood were not necessarily valid in the eyes of *'Evidence Based Practice'* due simply to the *'lack of being tested through a randomised control trial (RCT)'*. I found myself in a learning institution where the modern developing philosophy of Chiropractic is based in a world of exclusively RCT, systematic analysis, and meta-analysis, with the exclusion of all *'untested'* techniques.

It was confusing and disturbing based on my upbringing and exposure to chiropractic when it appeared that there seemed to be a concerted effort by the faculty to debase traditional chiropractic philosophy and replace it with what appeared to be an attempt to absorb the profession of Chiropractic into the medical field. I saw colleagues receive failing grades for using the term *'subluxation'* in papers. I personally received failing grades for asserting that chiropractic care can produce effects (intended or otherwise) outside the exclusively musculoskeletal system.

Clearly chiropractic and particularly chiropractic education is at a crossroads where there are desires to bring the field of chiropractic into the *'Evidence Based Practice'* arena and yet the "magic" of chiropractic; its techniques, unchartered territory, philosophy and history appear to be relegated to the *'junk drawer'*. I graduated in April 2024 and I found during my education that there has been not only discouragement toward differing philosophies, but outright hostility.

As I have I found out through several chiropractic doctors and students I have since met from other universities, this pervasive philosophy of a reductionistic approach to chiropractic is almost ubiquitous in our chiropractic learning establishments. From my limited perspective it seems as though the solution is not to continue to bend *'chiropractic medicine'* to the tenets of the medical field and their research strategies, but to develop a more effective method to test and document the effects and abilities of chiropractors in clinical practice that have been helping patients for years. We should not deny patients the techniques and skills that we have that can help them simply because we have not had 3 double-blinded RCTs of a specific quality as well as a meta-analysis with conclusive evidence.

I am bursting with excitement to enter the clinical realm of chiropractic practice and am eager to begin helping the patients that crawl in my door to walk out 30 minutes later. I feel we can temper Evidence Based Practice with chiropractic along with maintaining the methods used for decades that have not yet been adequately studied in the research arena.

For me my life has been a form of a research study and watching patients reliably coming to see my mother and be helped gives me hope I might be able to do some of her chiropractic *'magic'* in my own practice.

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