

# Overcoming Chiophobia

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**Narrative:** This paper reviews the adversarial nature of the American Medical Association and gives its origin as Morris Fishbein who, for a quarter of a Century (1924-1949) led a concerted attack on Chiropractors. This resulted in many being jailed allegedly for practicing medicine without a licence.

Fishbein got into bed with Big Tobacco, and raised millions for the AMA through allowing tobaccos companies to advertise their products in the Journal of the American Medical Association of which he was editor. He boasted about how much such advertising he 'turned down' and did not accept.

The AMA's Golden Goose of Big Tobacco was replaced by Big Pharma as governments woke up to the negative health effects associated with tobacco.

Even today political medicine is behind scare campaigns against Chiropractic, most notably through trying to associate the risk of stroke with the skilled cervical adjustments provided by a trained Chiropractor.

Not even the outcome of the *Wilk v. AMA antitrust trial* could restore the damage inflicted upon Chiropractors in conspiracy described as 'systematic, long-term wrongdoing, and the long-term intent to destroy a licensed profession'. 'By labelling all chiropractors unscientific cultists, injury to reputation was assured by the AMA's name-calling practice', which was exactly the goal of the medical Goodfellas, to defame its main competition to invalidate their expertise and to capture the healthcare marketplace.

This paper is essential reading for all students of the profession, and indeed for those Chiropractors who may have forgotten the price paid by others before them to give them the freedoms they enjoy today in practice.

**Indexing terms:** Chiropractic; AMA; Wilk Trial; Fishbein; Big Tobacco; Big Pharma.

## Introduction

*'Propaganda is a truly terrible weapon in the hands of an expert'*

Adolf Hitler, 1924 (1)

**T**he on-going medical war against chiropractors in the media reminds me of a quote attributed to former US Senator Richard Russell from Georgia who once told his opponent during a debate, *'If you'll quit telling lies on me, I'll quit telling the truth on you'*.

*... the ongoing virtual censorship of Chiropractic in the media is not by chance, but by choice. ...'*

I doubt the medical misinformers will voluntarily stop telling lies about chiropractors, and I will not stop telling the truth about the 'national scandal' of medical spine care and the continued censorship in the media as long as patients are railroaded into drugs, shots, and unnecessary surgeries.



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1. S Luckert and S Bachrach, "State of Deception: the Power of Nazi Propaganda," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum handout.

However, facts alone will not change a societal attitude that has been embedded for nearly a century just as racism did not cease with the *Civil Rights Act*. Before Chiropractors find their rightful niche in America's healthcare system as the primary spine providers, we need to wrap our heads around this complex issue and look at this problem as a psychologist might.

Robert B Cialdini PhD in his book, *Influence, the Psychology of Persuasion*, gives his insight how public opinion is formed and how to influence it. According to Cialdini, public opinion is characterised as a '*click, whirr*' stimulus/response situation. In our case, click on the topic of chiropractic and then, whirr, out rolls the pre-recorded medical tape, that is, the propaganda the public and press have learned for nearly a century from the trolls originating at the AMA's Committee on Quackery (CoQ).

In her Opinion at the *Wilk v. AMA* antitrust trial, Judge Susan Getzendanner spoke about the whirr damage done to chiropractors' reputations by the AMA's propaganda campaign:

'The activities of the AMA undoubtedly have injured the reputation of chiropractors generally...In my judgment, this injury continues to the present time and likely continues to adversely affect the plaintiffs. The AMA has never made any attempt to publicly repair the damage the boycott did to chiropractors' reputations'. (2)

Let's be frank: no other profession has endured the massive defamation campaign as Chiropractors have suffered at the hands of the AMA that '*continues to the present time*'. It was an illegal albeit effective ploy to destroy a competitor's image in order to capture the spine care market.

It is past time to openly address the medical prejudice against chiropractors and the related media indifference to confront this embedded bias I have coined as '*chirophobia*', the irrational fear, antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, or hatred of chiropractors instilled by decades of organised medical propaganda.

On the rare occasion Chiropractic is featured in the media, it may focus on the one-in-five million patient's adverse event, the Medicare insurance scammers, the egregious patient recruitment methods, or focus on the outlandish *chirovangelists* who chant '*the only thing chiropracTIC can't cure is rigor mortis*'.

But the mainstream media has never mentioned the benefits chiropractors bring to a society riddled with chronic back pain amendable to manipulation and when spine researchers openly say '*medical spine care is a national scandal*'. And this media boycott comes at a time when back pain is the #1 disabling condition in the nation, in our military services, and in the world that can be laid at the doorstep of ineffective medical spine treatments.

Is this situation not newsworthy? Or is it a situation where the medically-tainted media cannot overcome its own bias and admit those damn chiropractors were right all along?

Indeed, the public is clueless about the impact of chirophobia. Similar to any bias like racism, sexism, or homophobia, the public has no conscious thought of the dubious origin or accuracy of this medical muck about chiropractors, it's just a belief that floats around our society like the flu bug ready to infect anyone without immunity from such medical nonsense.

The medical stigma of chiropractors as an '*unscientific cult*' is a perception rooted in prejudice, not facts, the result of an illegal antitrust campaign, not the opinion of researchers, nor state or federal health authorities.

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2. Getzendanner, Memorandum Opinion and Order, p. 10

However, between that reality and public perception is the poisonous pen of the AMA spewing ink by the barrel to demean the reputations of chiropractors in order to control the \$100 billion back pain treatment industry.

For instance, when a respondent replied to a poll question about his opinion of Chiropractors, he responded with a shocking comment, 'I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one', (3) that illustrates the negative medical stigma remains well embedded in the public's mind.

### Don't slip discs, do slip joints

Aside from chirophobia, another standard click, whirr situation is the pervasive mistaken belief that the root causes of back pain are either '*pulled muscles*' or '*slipped discs*'. In fact, neither belief is true and neither is an acceptable diagnosis, but both continue in our medical folklore.

One researcher even dubbed 'bad discs' as '*incidentalomas*' because discs are as incidental to back pain as 'finding grey hair' since it's part of the aging process. (4)

Yet today patients are still routinely told they need disc fusion because the MRI detected a '*slipped disc*' or similar terms such as a '*herniated/ruptured/degenerated disc*' that supposedly requires some type of spine surgery, a notion dispelled by research and rejected by evidence-based guidelines.

The mainstream media also fosters this outdated concept of back pain from everyday TV ads to reports on ESPN of injured sports figures who are said to have '*slipped discs*' when, in reality, discs don't slip, but joints do. In fact, discs are simply shock absorbers between vertebrae that cannot move, slip, herniate, or rupture until the altered spinal mechanics cause them to become abnormal. This is the biggest click that must change the whirr for people to understand why Chiropractic care works so well.

Counting all the vertebral joints, sacroiliac joints, rib heads, and the pubic symphysis, new research now suggests the total is 313, a fact that is lost to most physicians. This total includes all synovial, symphysis, and syndesmosis joints according to Gregory D Cramer DC, PhD, Dean of Research at *National University of Health Sciences*. (5)

Considering there are over 300 joints in the spinal column comprised of 24 small vertebrae, it is easy to understand why joint dysfunction is the primordial cause of most mechanical back pain cases and, therefore, why joint manipulation or mobilisation works so well to restore joint play, the prerequisite of a normal functioning spine.

However, there remains a huge disconnect between the researchers and medical practitioners who aren't knowledgeable of this twenty-year old research. Consequently, the click of public opinion that '*pulled muscles*' or '*slipped discs*' continues to stimulate the whirr of pain pills, muscle relaxants, and disc surgery despite proof to the contrary.

In this era of evidence-based guidelines, the new research and 'best practices' have redeemed the chiropractic profession, but a new-found whirr will only happen if the media reveals this twenty five year old truth, which is a hard barrier to overcome considering most health reporters are MDs who are sponsored by Big Pharma, and neither wants to see chiropractors succeed even if the suffering public would benefit.

Mr. George McAndrews, attorney for the chiropractors-plaintiffs in the Wilk v. AMA antitrust trial, mentioned in 1991 the benefits chiropractors offer to the public:

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3. "Attitudes Toward Chiropractic Health Care in Oklahoma," Welling & Company and Oklahoma Chiropractic Research Foundation in cooperation with the Chiropractic Association of Oklahoma (1984)
  4. Richard A. Deyo, MD, MPH and Donald L. Patrick, PhD, MSPH, Hope or Hype: The Obsession with Medical Advances and the High Cost of False Promises, AMACOM books, (2005): 36-37
  5. G Cramer, Dean of Research, National University of Health Sciences, via personal communication with JC Smith (April 29, 2009)

'The best result of this case is that you're starting to see more medical studies of chiropractic, more meetings at the academic level, and greater acceptance. The effect has been to jump start the kind of cooperation that should have taken place 20 years ago. It's great for the chiropractors. But the biggest beneficiary, really, is the patient'. (6)

Unfortunately, there has been no 'fair and balanced' reporting or whistleblower exposés when it comes to the medical boycott of chiropractors to inform the public. Too few medical reporters have broached this issue because it reveals the inefficiency of medical spine care as well as shows the enormous influence Big Pharma and the AMA wield in the media.

Many renowned spine experts are speaking out on the paradigm shift in spine care. In fact, some suggest this huge burden can be laid at the doorstep of medical spine care (opioid drugs, epidural shots, fusion surgery) that has been dubbed the '*poster child of inefficient spine care*' by Mark Schoene, editor of THEBACKLETTER, a leading international spine research journal.

Schoene also warns that '*such an important area of medicine has fallen to this level of dysfunction should be a national scandal. In fact, this situation is bringing the United States disrespect internationally*'. (7)

My goal as a whistleblower with this paper is to change the click and thus the whirr in the public and press about the stigma of chiropractic as well as about the misconceptions surrounding medical diagnosis and spine care. Ironically, it will also bring some long overdue respect back to spine care and to the chiropractic profession.

Once this chirophobia is exposed for the danger it represents to society, only then will the health of Americans improve substantially without more lives wasted by narcotic painkiller drugs, worthless steroid injections, or unnecessary spine surgery.

Unfortunately, the public has not heard one word about this paradigm shift in spine care because chiropractors have not been buying ink by the barrel like the medical profession has over the past century.

### The Medical GoodFellas

Unknown to the general public, there is a fascinating yet clandestine history of the medical-media war against Chiropractors. Before I delve into the current examples of media malfeasance concerning Chiropractic and the current spine care controversies, let me share the highlights in the history of this censorship.

Recall the Martin Scorsese 1990 classic movie, *GoodFellas*, which was nominated for six Academy Awards. Like any mob family, the *GoodFellas*' power came from fear, its wealth from theft, and its final solution was death to its enemies.

In a similar fashion, the medical *Goodfellas* family has developed its own bastion of power via political skullduggery, became wealthy by jumping into bed with tobacco and drugs, and used character assassination to degrade competition in order to monopolise its market.

Just like the *GoodFellas*, an illicit element in the AMA for nearly a century has resembled a '*medical mob*' that bullied its foes with bogus incarceration by its legal cronies, hired yellow journalists to slander opponents in the media, and partook in political skullduggery to influence legislators. These medical *GoodFellas* constitute the backstabbers, the misinformers, and the dark side of the medical underworld that has rarely been exposed by the complicit mainstream media.

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6. Bryan Miller, Chiropractors vs. AMA, Chicago Reader, June 27, 1991

7. US Spine Care System in a State of Continuing Decline?, The BACKLetter, vol. 28, #10, 2012, pp.1

'The AMA has built a fortress around medical care in this country. They have achieved their fortress illegally. They're in the position of power in the health-care system', said attorney McAndrews. (8)

This impervious fortress has been buoyed by a complicit press that refuses to look objectively at the damage the medical mob has done despite the fact that America leads the world in every category of chronic disease. And standing behind this medical narco-terrorism is Big Pharma with billions in its war chest to fight against any intrusion into its drug cartel. Indeed, no one messes with the medical mob.

### The Medical Godfather

And, like any mob family, the medical Goodfellas also had its original godfather, Morris Fishbein, MD, who led the AMA's hit squad and propaganda machine with his malicious leadership and poisoned pen for a quarter of a century.



Morris Fishbein, aka, 'Medical Mussolini'  
AMA executive director, 1924-49

Chiropractic historian, Russell Gibbons, recognised the impact of Morris Fishbein who was the executive director of the AMA from 1924 to 1949 and concluded he was '*the most important non-chiropractor to influence the chiropractic profession*'. (9) His influence was not only directly as a foe in the political arena, but indirectly as the architect behind the stigma chiropractors faced in the public media.

Fishbein ran the AMA with the tyrannical leadership of a Mafioso crime boss and he was duly dubbed the *Medical Mussolini* by his contemporaries, a moniker he wore with pride. He characteristically donned the appearance of a mobster at official events sporting an iconic double-breasted white gangster suit.

By 1913, he was promoted as the assistant to the editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and in 1924, Fishbein became editor of the Journal. (10) Aside from his political

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8. Bryan Miller, Chiropractors vs. AMA, Chicago Reader, June 27, 1991

9. RW Gibbons, "From Quacks To Colleagues?" Viewing the evolution of orthodox tolerance of deviant medical practice, Journal of Chiropractic Humanities 4/1 (1994):61-71.

10. D Ullman, How the American Medical Association Got Rich, City: Publisher, year, www.Natural News.com.

skullduggery, his poisoned pen became the greatest weapon of this mob boss as the mastermind of the AMA's propaganda campaign.

Without question, the bigotry against Chiropractors fomented by the *Medical Mussolini* resembled the embedded racism in the South. Although sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia had diffuse origins, the medical bigotry toward Chiropractors, a bias I have coined '*chirophobia*,' can be traced directly back to this one man, Morris Fishbein. Indeed, Jim Crow MD was his creation and remains the last bastion of unchallenged prejudice in America.

Fishbein admitted '*The AMA had no public or press relations when I came*'. He gave the AMA a public voice in the media, and it was a repressive one, especially for those who crossed swords with him. His frequent, loud attacks were broadcast far and wide, in part through his own syndicated column as well as a weekly radio program heard by millions of Americans. (11)

Fishbein became the foremost medical political spokesman of his time; he understood the importance of print and broadcast media, and utilised it to the fullest to influence legislators. He was a frequent contributor to popular magazines such as the *American Mercury*, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *McCall's*, *Reader's Digest*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Fishbein authored twenty-two books between 1924 and 1947, three of which; *The Medical Follies*, *The New Medical Follies* (specifically, osteopathy, homeopathy, and chiropractic) and *Fads and Quackery in Healing*, sold three million copies. (12)

### Most terrifying trade association on Earth

In 1925 Fishbein wrote: '*Scientific medicine absorbs from them that which is good, if there is any good, and then they die*'. (13) In 1932 the Fishbein-led AMA officially adopted his goal to destroy Chiropractic according to historian Walter Wardwell:

'Eight years ago officials of the American Medical Association met in secret conclave in Chicago and adopted the slogan "Chiropractic must die". They gave themselves ten years in which to exterminate it'. (14)

The Medical Mussolini made no bones about his position on the autonomy of his medical profession:

'We insist that the practice of medicine is a doctor's problem. The doctor is the only one entitled by training, by experience, and by law to take care of the sick. Medicine is still a profession. It must never become a business or a trade, never the subservient tool of a governmental bureaucracy'. (15)

Certainly Fishbein was prophetic that the AMA must never become '*subservient tool of a governmental bureaucracy*', but he was obviously wrong that medicine '*must never become a business*' inasmuch as the medical industrial complex is now a nearly \$3 trillion annually enterprise.

According to a 1938 issue of *Fortune*, he '*promoted the AMA from a mild academic body into a powerful trade association*'. (16) By 1939, Fishbein was considered worse than Mussolini by Joseph Ambrose Jerger, MD:

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11. M Mayer, "The Rise and Fall of Dr. Fishbein," *Harper's Magazine*, 199/1194 (Nov. 1949): 81.

12. *Ibid.*

13. M Fishbein, *Medical Follies*, New York, Boni & Liveright, (1925): 43.

14. Wardwell WI. *Alternative medicine in the United States*. *Soc Sci Med* 1994;38:1061-1068. (Citing Reed L. *The healing cults*. Chap 3, Publ No.16 of the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care, p 5. University Press, Chicago, 1932

15. Excerpt from *Doctored*, documentary by Jeff Hays, released 2012.

16. "The A.M.A. Voice," *Fortune*, November 1938: 152+

'Mark Twain told me that this was a land of free speech and liberty. Well, so it is, but Dr. Fishbein [Morris Fishbein, AMA spokesman and Journal editor] is a dictator, a Hitler ... But the trouble here is too much concentrated power, power that will not stand for criticism of thought or action in American medicine'. (17)

**In 1939, MA Bealle, author of Medical Mussolini, described the vast power of Morris Fishbein:**

'Of doubtful medical credentials, but undoubted business acumen and vulpine cunning, the new prince and potentate establishes valuable tie-ups, makes brilliant connections, solidifies weak lines, compels moneyed interests to pony up, hammers falterers into submission, excommunicates 'non-conformists' with ridicule and vilification, employs guerrilla tactics as blandly as he'd light a cigarette and keeps everlastingly at tying up the loose threads until a potent medical trust assumes shape'. (18)

**This medical godfather also wielded great political power willing to whack anyone in his way. According to historian Gibbons, Chiropractors felt the brunt as one of the first grass roots movements in America:**

'... like abolitionists, chiropractors were systematically persecuted and driven from town to town. Like the feminists and suffragettes, chiropractors were made objects of ridicule. And like the civil rights workers of more recent times, chiropractors were intimidated and subverted by agents and provocateurs. In the finest tradition of reform movements, they were imprisoned for their beliefs'. (19)

**From New York to Louisiana to California, chiropractors were routinely harassed, extorted, arrested, often run out of town, and beaten up by the local police at the urging of the medical society. During the first half of the twentieth century, over 12,000 American chiropractors were prosecuted over 15,000 times, and some 3,300 were sent to jail for practicing medicine without a license. (20)**

**Until 1922, when a referendum was passed in California to protect chiropractors, roundups were used to jail chiropractors en masse as this account testifies:**

**In just one year [1921] 450 of approximately 600 chiropractors were hauled into court and convicted of practicing without a license. They were given jail sentences or the alternative of a fine. They chose to go to jail. (21)**



Lyndon McCash, DC, in jail in Oakland, Calif., in 1920 one of hundreds of California chiropractors incarcerated for unlicensed practice prior to passage of the Chiropractic Act in 1922.

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17. No author, "Medicine: Here's Your Hat!" TIME (Apr. 03, 1939):46-7.

18. MA Bealle Medical Mussolini, Columbia Publishing Co. third ed. Washington, DC. (1939)

19. Russell W. Gibbons, From "Quacks To Colleagues?" Viewing the evolution of orthodox tolerance of deviant medical practice, Journal of Chiropractic Humanities, 1994 ;4(1):61-71.

20. Russell W Gibbons, "Go to Jail for Chiro," Journal of Chiropractic Humanities 4 (1994): 61-71.

21. B Inglis. The Case For Unorthodox Medicine, New York: GP Putnam (1963)

If incarceration didn't deter these stalwart DCs, then the medical goons resorted to more drastic tactics. Dr Evon Barvinchack, a second-generation Chiropractor, spoke of a childhood event in the 1940s when the '*Juice Man*' from the local police department in Binghamton, New York, dragged his father out into the front yard and publicly beat him to squeeze him for extortion payoff. (22)

By the end of Fishbein's reign of terror in 1949, writer Milton Mayer in Harper's magazine recognised Fishbein's huge impact as a power broker: (23)

'In the course of thirty-seven single-minded and single-handed years, he had converted a panty-waist professional society into the most terrifying trade association on earth'. (24)

As a result of Fishbein's poisoned pen and autocratic political power, his anti-chiropractic message reached millions of people and influenced thousands of legislators, essentially turning the medical profession into the fourth branch of government, albeit autonomous, mean-spirited, and self-serving.

Mr George McAndrews also noted the acquired cultural power of the AMA to damage chiropractic as a whole and how the medical society turned a blind eye to help patients:

'These people were a fourth branch of government, a self-subsumed title, and they were challenging both the Federal and State governments.

'In this case we have got evidence that they play games with words: it's scientific if the MD does it. It's unscientific if the chiropractor does it. It's twice as effective if a chiropractor does it, but that just has therapeutic value, it's not scientific ... Their attitude was 'to heck with the patients ...

'The hospital is loaded with patients that could utilise chiropractic services ... They should have found out that medical physician studies were showing that chiropractic was twice as effective as medical care in certain orthopaedic problems'. (25)

McAndrews summarised his closing remarks when he noted:

'This is the first time anywhere in any trial where the "Marcus Welby" [TV series from 1969 to 1976 of an altruistic MD] mask has been stripped away from them and they have been revealed for what they are'.

### Strange bedfellows

Despite Fishbein's notoriety as the Medical Mussolini, he also had his admirers considering that in 1970 The *Morris Fishbein Center for the History of Science and Medicine* was established at the *University of Chicago* to support teaching and research in the history of science and medicine. Although Chiropractors and other non-allopathic professions may resent his tyranny, obviously many in the medical and pharmaceutical professions appreciated the medical monopoly he created.

However, there are some parts of his history that go unmentioned. Indeed, the power of the Medical Mussolini could not have developed without a lot of money, and in order to fund his war chest he jumped into bed with Big Tobacco in 1930. Fishbein's ability to finance his massive propaganda and political campaign occurred when he developed a quid pro quo relationship with the greatest killer of Americans ever known, the tobacco industry.

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22. E Barvinchack via private communication with JC Smith, 9-9-10.

23. Wallace, *ibid*.

24. M Mayer, *ibid*. p. 76.

25. G McAndrews closing arguments, *Wilk v. AMA*, (June 26, 1987):3363-64





Before Big Pharma owned medicine, Big Tobacco was the AMA's sugar daddy. In order to obtain millions of dollars in advertisements that fuelled his war coffers, Fishbein allowed tobacco ads in the AMA journals, allowed tobacco vendors at its conventions, and allowed images of MDs in public ads virtually giving the AMA's stamp of approval despite the emerging evidence of the dangers of tobacco products.

For a moment, grasp the implications of this sordid love affair between Big Tobacco and the medical profession, the self-described '*guardians of health*', that had no qualms about promoting what became the biggest cause of cardio-pulmonary diseases. Nor has the AMA ever apologised to the public for its disgusting affair once research proved the deadly nature of tobacco.

In 1948, the AMA's accounting showed revenues of \$4,858,000 from '*periodical subscriptions and advertising*' out of \$5,166,000 from all sources. Fishbein admitted '*I turn down as much advertising as I accept, over a million a year*'. (26)

Imagine this value in today's dollars and you'll understand the power and influence the AMA wields over the media and on Capitol Hill, just as Big Pharma does today.

After an uproar in 1986 when the public learned their MDs were in bed with Big Tobacco, the AMA reluctantly divested itself from tobacco money. To no one's surprise, the powerful AMA simply replaced Big Tobacco with Big Pharma as the sugar daddy to finance its public and political goals. Either way, tobacco or drugs, the AMA remains in bed with one of the biggest killers in society today.

Although Big Tobacco subsidised the original Medical Mussolini with millions of dollars, that sum is pale in comparison with the AMA's present sugar daddy, Big Pharma, that spends billions to promote drug companies' products by influencing doctors' prescribing practices. (27)

26. MS Mayer, "The Rise and Fall of Dr. Fishbein," Harper's Magazine, (Nov. 1949): 76-85.

27. Persuading the Prescribers: Pharmaceutical Industry Marketing and its Influence on Physicians and Patients, November 11, 2013, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2013/11/11/persuading-the-prescribers-pharmaceutical-industry-marketing-and-its-influence-on-physicians-and-patients>

According to a report by the PEW Charitable Trusts, in 2012, the pharmaceutical industry spent more than \$27 billion on drug promotion, more than \$24 billion on marketing to physicians and over \$3 billion on advertising to consumers mainly through television commercials. (28)

- ▶ Direct to Consumer TV ads = \$3.1 billion
- ▶ Detailing (face-to-face sales and promotional activities) = \$15 billion
- ▶ Clinical Trials = \$130 million
- ▶ Samples (free meds provided to physicians) = \$5.7 billion
- ▶ Educational and promotional meetings = \$2.1 billion
- ▶ Promotional mailings = \$1.2 billion
- ▶ Advertisements (print) = \$90 million

In fact, Big Pharma is spending more money to sell products than to develop new ones, and apparently it's been working. Drug company revenues climbed more than \$200 billion in the years between 1995 and 2010 according to a 2012 report in the *British Medical Journal*, 'Pharmaceutical research and development: what do we get for all that money?' (29)

The authors say that for one dollar pharmaceutical companies spend on basic research, \$19 goes toward promotion and marketing. Prescription drug companies aren't putting a lot of resources toward new, groundbreaking medication. Instead, it's more profitable for them to simply to create a bunch of products that are only slightly different from drugs already on the market, the authors said.

With billions spent on marketing, obviously it would be a cardinal sin if any medical reporter were to endorse a non-drug treatment considering the overabundance of drugs sold over-the-counter and by prescription for back pain. Indeed, the commercial and medical media learned years ago not to bite the hand that feeds them.

Just take a look at the 100+ medications used and imagine the billions of dollars made from medications used in the treatment of back pain:

Examples of nonprescription pain medications include:

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)  
Aspirin  
Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB)  
Naproxen (Aleve)

Mefenamic acid (Ponstel)  
Meloxicam (Mobic)  
Nabumetone (Relafen)  
Naproxen (Naprosyn, Anaprox)  
Oxaprozin (Daypro)  
Piroxicam (Feldene)  
Sulindac (Clinoril)  
Tolmetin (Tolectin)

Examples of prescription medications include the following:  
Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

Diclofenac (Voltaren)  
Diflunisal (Dolobid)  
Etodolac (Lodine)  
Fenoprofen (Nalfon)  
Flurbiprofen (Ansaid)  
Ibuprofen (Motrin)  
Indomethacin (Indocin, Indo-Lemmon)  
Ketorolac (Toradol)

COX-2 inhibitor  
Celecoxib (Celebrex)  
  
Opioid analgesics  
Acetaminophen with codeine (Tylenol #2, #3, #4)  
Buprenorphine (Butrans)

28. Cegedim Strategic Data, 2012 U.S. Pharmaceutical Company Promotion Spending (2013), [http://www.skainfo.com/health\\_care\\_market\\_reports/2012\\_promotional\\_spending.pdf](http://www.skainfo.com/health_care_market_reports/2012_promotional_spending.pdf).

29. Pharmaceutical research and development: what do we get for all that money? *BMJ* 2012; 345 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.e4348> (Published 07 August 2012) Cite this as: *BMJ* 2012;345:e4348

Fentanyl transdermal patches  
(Duragesic)  
Hydrocodone with acetaminophen  
(Lortab Elixir, Vicodin)  
Hydrocodone with ibuprofen  
(Vicoprofen)  
Hydrocodone (Zohydro)  
Hydromorphone (Exalgo)  
Meperidine (Demerol, Merpergan)  
Methadone (Dolophine)  
Morphine and morphine sustained  
release (MS-Contin, Avinza, Kadian)  
Oxycodone sustained release  
(OxyContin)  
Oxycodone with acetaminophen  
(Percocet)  
Oxycodone with aspirin (Percodan)  
Oxycodone with ibuprofen (Combunox)  
Oxymorphone (Opana, Opana ER)  
Pentazocine (Talwin,)  
Propoxyphene with aspirin,  
propoxyphene with acetaminophen  
Tapentadol (Nucynta, Nucynta ER)  
Tramadol, tramadol with  
acetaminophen (Ultram, Ultracet)

Mixed opioid agonist/antagonists  
Pentazocine/naloxone (Talwin NX)  
Butorphanol  
Nalbuphine (Nubain)

Antidepressants  
Amitriptyline (Elavil)  
Bupropion (Wellbutrin)  
Desipramine (Norpramin)  
Duloxetine (Cymbalta)  
Imipramine (Tofranil)  
Venlafaxine (Effexor)

#### Anticonvulsants

Carbamazepine (Tegretol)  
Clonazepam (Klonopin)  
Gabapentin (Neurontin)  
Lamotrigine (Lamictal)  
Pregabalin (Lyrica)  
Tiagabine (Gabitril)  
Topiramate (Topamax)

Fibromyalgia medication  
Milnacipran (Savella)

#### Anxiolytics

Alprazolam (Xanax)  
Diazepam (Valium)  
Lorazepam (Ativan)  
Triazolam (Halcion)

#### Muscle relaxants

Baclofen (Lioresal)  
Carisoprodol (Soma)  
Chlorzoxazone (Parafon Forte, DSC)  
Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril)  
Dantrolene (Dantrium)  
Metaxalone (Skelaxin)  
Methocarbamol (Robaxin)  
Orphenadrine (Norflex)  
Tizanidine (Zanaflex)

#### Corticosteroids

Cortisone  
Prednisone  
Prednisolone  
Dexamethasone  
Methylprednisolone (Medrol, A-  
Methapred, Depo Medrol, Solu Medrol)  
Triamcinolone (Allernaze, Aristospan 5  
mg, Aristospan Injection 20 mg, Kenalog  
10 Injection, Kenalog Nasacort AQ)

As you can see, the media war against chiropractors has two major foes; the medical journalists suffering from a deeply ingrained prejudice, and their major sponsor, Big Pharma. As I mentioned before, just as solar energy will never take off as long as Big Oil owns the sun, neither will Chiropractic become a mainstream media topic as long as Big Pharma owns the media operated by chirophobic skills and sponsors.

### Mistress of misinformation

After the ouster of the Medical Mussolini in 1949, Fishbein's role as propaganda minister lay dormant until 1962 when the AMA formed its Committee on Quackery (CoQ) that announced its

goal to 'contain and eliminate the chiropractic profession', (30) and developed a campaign comparing chiropractors to 'rabid dogs' and 'killers'. (31)

Choosing the clandestine tactic to remain 'behind the scenes,' the CoQ hired reporters to smear the image of chiropractic in the press, such as journalist Ralph Lee Smith's 1969 book *At Your Own Risk: The Case Against Chiropractic*, (32) which was clearly a biased attack on the profession of Chiropractic.



Columnist Ann Landers

Without a doubt, the biggest propaganda coup by the CoQ included recruiting syndicated columnist Esther 'Eppie' Pauline Friedman Lederer, aka, 'Ann Landers', whose column appeared in over 1,000 US newspapers, in some of them for seven days a week, and she was considered the most prominent newspaper columnist in America.

Ann Landers lived in Chicago where the headquarters of the AMA was also located and the CoQ quickly developed a relationship to further its cause to defame Chiropractors. The AMA used her and other reporters to show that 'third parties' were attacking Chiropractors, not just the AMA spin doctors.

One would expect a nationally known newspaper columnist to get her facts straight, however, not only were Ann Landers' columns without scientific merit, she often resorted to ridicule to make her point, such as in her infamous '*goofus feathers*' comment in 1971:

'Chiropractors are wonderful, if you have a tired back, and nothing else ... A person who has been massaged by a chiropractor and gets well often credits the chiropractor with having cured him. The truth is, he'd probably have been cured if he had fanned himself with *goofus feathers*'. (33)

She wrote that patients wasted money on '*this poppycock*' until they '*get smart and seek medical care*'. (34) Landers repeated the AMA's allegation of patient safety, but offered no proof that patients were unduly harmed by Chiropractors.

Unknown to the public, she was paid by the AMA to ridicule chiropractors in her *Ask Ann Landers* advice columns in exchange for favours and compensation that included the prestigious inaugural visit behind the '*bamboo curtain*' when President Nixon met Chairman Mao in 1972. She traveled to China with the AMA delegation as a '*volunteer advisor*'. When criticised for this apparent quid pro quo, she responded sarcastically '*I need a free trip like a giraffe needs a sore throat*'. (35)

Ann Lander's secret relationship with the CoQ was revealed during a deposition for the *Wilk et al. v. AMA et al. antitrust trial*. Landers admitted under oath that she had been worked with the AMA to write articles condemning Chiropractic as an '*unscientific cult*'. When confronted by

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30. G McAndrews, "Plaintiffs' Summary of Proofs as an Aid to the Court," Civil Action No. 76 C 3777, Wilk, (June 25, 1987) Throckmorton, Howard, Taylor, and Monaghan Deps.

31. JA Sabatier, Minutes from the "Chiropractic Workshop," Michigan State Medical Society, held in Lansing on 10 May 1973, exhibit 1283, Wilk.

32. RL Smith, *At Your Own Risk: The Case Against Chiropractic*, New York: Trident Press, (1969)

33. Ask Ann Landers, "Chiropractors Eyed," *The Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA. (January 28, 1971)

34. Ask Ann Landers, "Dog in Chiropractor's Office?" *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, NC. (August 5, 1974)

35. Letter to Mr. Robert U. Brown from Ann Landers (Oct. 8, 1974): PX-1687.

intelligent rebuttals to her columns from readers and Chiropractors who refuted her misinformation, she also admitted she turned to the AMA for help in writing responses.

In his closing statement at the *Wilk v. AMA antitrust trial* Mr George McAndrews noted that the evidence and testimony indicated the AMA continues to lag behind both in clinical methods and training for the epidemic of musculoskeletal disorders:

'... the medical physician community represented by defendants is years away from being able to duplicate the superior services of chiropractic ... that cannot be done overnight. *The New Zealand Commission* quoted Dr Haldeman's testimony that "12 months full-time training in spinal manipulative therapy following a medical degree would be appropriate"' (36)

McAndrews is adamant that '*medical doctors are no longer gatekeepers to chiropractors*', stating that '*somewhere people of goodwill will wake up to the abilities of Chiropractors that are unmatched for those patients in all physicians' offices who complain of neuromusculoskeletal problems*'. (37)

In her Opinion at the conclusion of the Wilk trial, Judge Susan Getzendanner wrote of the damage inflicted upon chiropractors and described the conspiracy as '*systematic, long-term wrongdoing, and the long-term intent to destroy a licensed profession*'. (38)

'*By labelling all chiropractors unscientific cultists, injury to reputation was assured by the AMA's name-calling practice*', which was exactly the goal of the medical Goodfellas, to defame its main competition to invalidate their expertise and to capture the healthcare marketplace.

Sadly, over 25 years after the landmark Wilk trial victory, this slander remains fait accompli. The public was never informed of the magnitude of this medical character assassination of the Chiropractic profession nor was the public made aware of the superior results of Chiropractic care over medical care.

The court gave the AMA a verbal reprimand and ordered them to pay court costs and attorney fees, and issued a permanent injunction to prevent future boycotts, but this trial was just a small bump in the road for this Goliath. The AMA was ordered to issue an explanation to its own members that was published in its Journal of the AMA stating it was now ethical to associate with practitioners of chiropractics.

There was no mea culpa to the public, no tabula rasa to the chiropractic profession, no one went to jail, and the AMA experienced relatively little punishment other than legal fees and paid a \$300,000 donation to the *Kentuckiana Children's Center*.

Considering the estimated \$700 million in lost revenues to chiropractors during the boycott from 1962 to 1980, the legal costs and fines were just the cost of doing business for the AMA.

Moreover, the damage continues considering chirophobia continues today in the court of public opinion and in the mainstream medical media because the AMA and its media mouthpieces have '*never made any attempt to publicly repair the damage the boycott did to chiropractors' reputations*'.

Indeed, the fascinating evidence was simply swept under the medical rug in the name of 'patient safety', but the judge admitted '*The AMA did not, during the entire period of the boycott, have reason to hold that view. It is clear that there were some therapeutic benefits of chiropractic that the AMA knew about*'.

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36. G McAndrews, "Plaintiffs' Summary of Proofs as an Aid to the Court," Civil Action No. 76 C 3777, Wilk, (June 25, 1987):80. (PX-1829).

37. Ibid.

38. Associated Press, "U.S. Judge Finds Medical Group Conspired Against Chiropractors," New York Times (1987)

Once the 'patient safety' issue was invalidated, the court admitted the medical war was primarily a turf battle. 'Absolutely', Judge Getzendanner confessed; 'Chiropractors compete with doctors. There's no question about it: it's basic competition'. (39)

### Chicken Little journalism

After sowing the seeds of chirophobia for decades, the AMA still relies upon outside reporters to do their dirty tricks to defame chiropractors. For years I've tracked the numerous biased articles in the mainstream media, such as *Redbook*, *McCall's*, *Consumer Reports*, *Parade*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *NBC's Today Show*, *ABC's Evening News*, *Woman's Day*, to name just a few.

Inexplicably, when articles do appear that expose the downside of medical spine care, rarely do they also mention Chiropractic care as the primary alternative recommended for the pandemic of back pain. Whether due to chirophobia or shoddy journalism, Chiropractic remains off the radar for most reporters unless, of course, it is of a salacious content.

For example, over the last few years a parade of damaging articles has gone viral within days of each other which seems to be too coincidental to be merely accidental. This trend reminds me of a storybook character with whom we're all quite familiar.

The famed children's story *Chicken Little* made fun of a ridiculous notion by a nervous chicken that ran hysterically around the barnyard screaming 'the sky is falling, the sky is falling' after an acorn fell on its head. Of course, everyone knew the sky wasn't falling, and the point of this story was to make light of a paranoid idea that may lead to mass hysteria.



R. Levin, "America's Biggest Lobby, the A.M.A.," *Journal of the National Chiropractic Association*, December 1949

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39. Bryan Miller, *Chiropractors vs. AMA*, *Chicago Reader*, June 27, 1991

Apparently the medical *Goodfellas* continue to play *Chicken Little* journalism to attack Chiropractic when several recent concurrent articles cried out '*Chiropractic causes strokes, Chiropractic causes strokes*'.

Every few years it appears routine for the *Goodfellas* fear mongers to attack Chiropractors with spurious claims about the dangers of cervical spinal manipulation causing strokes. Certainly this rekindles chiophobia to frighten the public and influences the press even though this issue has been dispelled more than once by objective scientists who don't have an ax to grind.

However, let's put this into proper perspective since it will resurface again. According to real researchers rather than medical skills, the rate of iatrogenic problems associated with spinal manipulative therapy rendered by chiropractors is only 1 in 5.85 million cases, which is less than the chance of having a stroke in a hair salon, in a dentist's chair, (40) or being hit by lightning (one in 600,000). (41) It equates to one occurrence in 48 chiropractic careers. (42) Of course, none of these figures were noted in these one-sided articles.

### The Biggest Chicken

Undoubtedly the biggest mouthpiece in the medical media profession has been Dr. Sanjay Gupta at CNN. He was among the first in the Chicken Little attack on chiropractic with his June 25, 2008 video '*Stroke After Chiropractic Care*', when he stated '*Hundreds of people have had strokes after having their necks manipulated*'.

I wrote to Dr. Gupta complaining about his misleading video segment. Here is an excerpt of my letter:

'Obviously a medical bias occurs when the truth is twisted to scare patients from seeking chiropractic care. This conundrum presents a huge PR problem for my profession. On one hand, we offer a valuable service that could greatly alleviate the present back pain epidemic and stave off many fusions but, on the other hand, the soiled image of Chiropractic from decades of medical bias has tainted my profession in the eyes of many patients'.

I never received a reply from Dr. Gupta, so I again wrote to him and his producer, Val Willingham, urging them to examine the paradigm shift in spine care and to consider a weekly show on CAM since Dr David Eisenberg from *Harvard's Osher Institute* revealed that Americans made more visits to complementary and alternative (CAM) providers than MDs, another issue they would probably prefer not mention to their viewers. (43)

When neither of them responded to my pleas, I sent another letter to Richard Davis, CNN EVP, concerning the Fairness Doctrine asking for equal time to defend my profession. Once again I received no response to my letter. I did notice Gupta's CNN video had been removed, but you can find it on YouTube @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ltnyFgUBt0>.

[Ed note: This video is cited as 'not available anymore, 22 December 2024]

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40. Management of Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office: Conditions in Each Country, the Extent of Treatment by the Dentist, *Anesth Prog.* 2006 Spring; 53(1): 20–24. DOI 10.2344/0003-3006(2006)53[20:MOMEIT]2.0.CO;2
  41. AGJ Terret, "Current Concepts in Vertebrobasilar Complications Following Spinal Manipulation," NCMIC Group Inc, West Des Moines, Iowa, (2001)
  42. G Bronfort, M Haas, R Evans, G Kawchuk, and S Dagenais, "Evidence-informed Management of Chronic Low Back Pain with Spinal Manipulation and Mobilization," *Spine* 8/1 (January-February 2008):213-25.
  43. DM Eisenberg, RC Kessler, C Foster, FE Norlock, DR Calkins, TL Delbanco, "Unconventional Medicine In The United States-- Prevalence, Costs, And Patterns Of Use," *N Engl J Med* 328 (1993):246-252.

Apparently freedom of the press is only true if you own the press. As Mark Twain warned never to get into a fight with someone who buys ink by the barrel, it is impossible to win a fight with a major cable network as well.

It appears CNN is not interested in pursuing the possible impact of Chiropractic care upon the back pain epidemic, the changing paradigm in spine diagnosis or treatments, Gupta's omissions, or the fact that Americans are seeking non-drug and non-MD care by the droves. Instead, CNN turns a blind eye to these issues for fear of offending its biggest sponsor, Big Pharma.

### Banned at CNN

By sheer coincidence, my book publicist at that time was a former CNN employee who contacted his friends at the CNN Headquarters in Atlanta asking why they had not responded to my letters. To our amazement, he was told I had been '*banned at CNN*' for my '*baseless accusations against Dr. Gupta*'. They never mentioned what those accusations were but apparently just questioning the sacrosanct Dr. Gupta was reason enough to ban me.

Indeed, there appears to be an embargo against anything positive about chiropractic at CNN. Considering Chiropractic is the third-largest physician-level health profession in the country as well as the presence of *Life University*, the largest Chiropractic College in the world, located in CNN's backyard in Marietta, this virtual censorship of Chiropractic in the media is not by chance, but by choice.

Again this proves my point that nearly all health reporters like Gupta at CNN are MDs who suffer from the typical medical bias, '*chirophobia*', and they will never promote their competitors just as Republicans will never promote Democrats. Moreover, these medical media skills will never bite the hand of Big Pharma which spends billions annually on advertising.

### English chickens

This stroke issue is not exclusively an American issue. In 2010 this issue resurfaced with an incendiary report from England '*Deaths after Chiropractic: a Review of Published Cases*', by Edzard Ernst of the Medical School at the *University of Exeter*. Once again he raised the level of fear over chiropractic care when he noted that '*Twenty-six fatalities were published since 1934 in 23 articles*'. (44)

Considering 26 deaths over 76 years equates to 0.34 deaths per year (which is one-third of a person), instead of sounding an alarm to scare people, Ernst should have praised Chiropractic care for its obvious safety since this is an extremely low rate in comparison with equivalent medical methods for the same diagnostic condition.

Ernst's paper drew quick criticism from *The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice*:

'Three deaths were reported during the last 10 years of the study, so for that most recent time period, the absolute risk could be estimated to be 3/10 per 100 million, or three deaths for every billion chiropractic encounters ... This rate is so low that it cannot possibly be considered significant ... An interesting flip side to the research question might be: by undergoing a course of chiropractic spinal manipulation, how many patients were able to avoid death by avoiding complications of surgical intervention?' (45)

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44. E Ernst "Deaths After Chiropractic: A Review Of Published Cases," Int J Clin Pract, 64/8 (July 2010):1162-1165

45. JM Whedon, GM Bove, MA Davis, "Critique of review of deaths after chiropractic, 5" Letter to editor, The International Journal of Clinical Practice, 65/1 (January 2011):102-106.



On June 8, 2012, a London newspaper published an article that came unexpectedly and immediately went viral, 'Letting Chiropractor "Crack" Your Neck To Relieve Pain Could Trigger Stroke' with the subtext, 'Neck "cracking" could trigger "catastrophic" health problems such as strokes, experts have warned'; (46) The common therapy to ease pain is 'clinically unnecessary' and should be abandoned for an affliction that affects two in three people at some point in their lives. Its effectiveness divides medical opinion with some doctors even believing it helps lower blood pressure.

Known scientifically as spinal manipulation, the technique involves the application of various types of thrusts to the lumbar spine for the lower back or cervical spine for the neck to reduce back, neck and other musculoskeletal pain.

However, physiotherapy lecturer Neil O'Connell, of *Brunel University*, Uxbridge, and colleagues have warned that cervical spine manipulation 'may carry the potential for serious neurovascular complications'.

Writing online in the *British Medical Journal*, they added that the technique is 'unnecessary and inadvisable'.

The outlandish and unproven statements in the original report attributed to physiotherapy lecturer Neil O'Connell, of *Brunel University*, Uxbridge, were extrapolated into subsequent articles as 'expert opinion' and 'scientists' rather than what it was, unsubstantiated speculation by one physiotherapist in England.

Let's be clear: we are not talking about an NIH expert, nor are we listening to the US Public Health Services, WHO, or the British NHS. We are witnessing one physiotherapist from an unknown university in a village, Uxbridge, in England who took a swipe at Chiropractors worldwide. This is clearly Chicken Little journalism, not peer-reviewed literature.

Nonetheless, this publication went viral with nine articles appearing within days across the pond. This unfounded attack was not spurred by any event, no one had died or was injured, so this attack virtually came out of nowhere:

- 'Is Spinal Manipulation For Neck Pain Safe?' by Lara Salahi, ABC World News With Diane Sawyer
- 'Is Spinal Manipulation For Neck Pain Safe? Experts Disagree' by Kim Painter, USA TODAY
- 'Should Spinal Manipulation For Neck Pain Be Abandoned?' Science Daily, June 7, 2012
- 'Spine Manipulation For Neck Pain "Inadvisable"' BBC News, 7 June 2012
- 'Debate Over Risk From Spinal Manipulation', NHS Choices, 7 June 2012
- 'Scientists Debate Safety And Value Of Spinal Manipulation For Neck Pain', Arthritis Research UK, Published on 08 June 2012
- 'Is Spine Manipulation For Neck Pain Safe? A Common Chiropractic Treatment For Neck Pain Is "Inadvisable" Due To A Risk Of Stroke, And Should Be Avoided, Say Experts' by Shawn Radcliffe, Men's Fitness,
- 'Stroke Risk From Neck Pain Treatment, Spinal Manipulation Used By Chiropractors As A Treatment For Neck Pain Should Be Abandoned Because Of The Risk Of Causing Strokes, Say Experts' by Peter Russell, Web MD
- 'Spinal Manipulation For Neck Pain Should Be Abandoned', by Ingrid Torjesen, Onmedica News, 8 June 2012

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46. ANI, London, 08 Jun 2012

This outcry is not only another paranoid Chicken Little issue aimed to cause public hysteria about chiropractic care, it's also an example of 'citation laundering' where writers misquote the facts, embellish each other's story, and pass on as 'perceived wisdom' by supposed experts who quote each other or parrot incendiary comments from other non-experts because they are controversial sound-bytes.

O'Connell warned that '*cervical spine manipulation may carry the potential for serious neurovascular complications*'. Writing online in the *British Medical Journal*, he added that the technique is '*unnecessary and inadvisable*'.

However, upon closer examination on the issue of iatrogenic problems, O'Connell overlooked many obvious problems in his one-sided condemnation of manipulation while ignoring bigger medical iatrogenic issues.

### Who's Hurting Who?

A 2002 analysis by Anthony Rosner PhD, compared medical procedures to chiropractic care and concluded that, in fact, patients need to be warned of the dangers of medical procedures rather than chiropractic care. Dr. Rosner discovered '*The statistics really begin to spin one's head*'. (47) Using a baseline figure of one stroke incidence per one million cervical manipulations as an estimate, Rosner found a:

- two times greater risk of dying from transfusing one unit of blood (48)
- 100 times greater risk of dying from general anaesthesia (49)
- 160-400 times greater risk of dying from use of NSAIDs (50)
- 700 times greater risk of dying from lumbar spinal surgery (51)
- 1000-10,000 times greater risk of dying from traditional gall bladder surgery (52)
- 10,000 times greater risk of serious harm from medical mistakes in hospitals (53)

O'Connell also ignored a comprehensive seven-year international study by *The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010 Task Force on Neck Pain and Its Associated Disorders* that found that alternative therapies such as neck manipulation, acupuncture, and massage are better choices for managing most common neck pain than many current medical practices. (54)

Numerous articles now support the value of manipulative therapy for neck and low back pain, all of which were omitted in O'Connell's article. To ignore these positive studies and infrequent adverse effects is evidence of physiotherapist O'Connell's willful ignorance of the subject matter. If Mr. O'Connell were truly interested in writing a 'fair and balanced' report on the dangers of treatments for cervical problems, why the omission of the benefits and relative safety of spinal manipulation rather than harping on the 1 in 5.85 million adverse event?

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47. A Rosner, "Evidence or Eminence-Based Medicine? Leveling the Playing Field Instead of the Patient," *Dynamic Chiropractic* 20/25 (November 30, 2002)

48. J Paling [www.healthcare speaker.com](http://www.healthcare speaker.com), 2000.

49. Paling, *ibid*.

50. V Dabbs, W Lauretti. "A Risk Assessment Of Cervical Manipulation Vs NSAIDs For The Treatment Of Neck Pain," *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* 18/8 (1995):530-536.

51. RA Deyo, DC Cherkin, JD Loesser, SJ Bigos, MA Ciol, "Morbidity and Mortality In Association With Operations On The Lumbar Spine: The Influence Of Age, Diagnosis, And Procedure," *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery Am* 74/4 (1992):536-543.

52. J Paling [www.healthcare speaker.com](http://www.healthcare speaker.com), 2000.

53. Paling, *ibid*.

54. S Haldeman, L Carroll, JD Cassidy, J Schubert, Å Nygren, "The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010 Task Force on Neck Pain and Its Associated Disorders: Executive Summary," 33/ 4S (February 15, 2008): Neck Pain Task Force Supplement.

Certainly the risks and benefits of all treatments are a part of legal informed consent procedures. However, I don't remember any similar debates over the use of NSAIDs, opioid painkillers, steroid injections, or surgery for neck pain although all of these have been shown to be more dangerous, addictive, disabling, and deadly than manipulation.

In 2006, Jay Triano DC, PhD wrote about the stroke issue in his publication, *Current Concepts in Spinal Manipulation and Cervical Arterial Incidents*, which included 675 references and a comprehensive discussion of cervical artery injury and manipulation (SMT). He also came to the sobering conclusion that Chiropractic is very safe:

- The increased risk of death resulting from NSAID use is 1,500 times greater than the risk of tetraplegia following cervical SMT.
- On analysis, SMT as delivered by chiropractors is one of the most conservative, least invasive and safest of procedures in the provision of health care services
- The risks of SMT pale when compared to known medical risks. Chiropractors, by their training and skill in SMT and special emphasis on the spine, are the best positioned to deliver this mode of health care to the public
- Conclusion: VBA stroke is a very rare event in the population. The increased risks of VBA stroke associated with chiropractic and PCP visits is likely due to patients with headache and neck pain from VBA dissection seeking care before their stroke. We found no evidence of excess risk of VBA stroke associated chiropractic care compared to primary care. (55)

No one is suggesting spinal manipulation does not have adverse effects for a very small percent of patients, but these are minimal as evidenced by the research as well as by huge differences in malpractice rates among DCs and MDs. Malpractice insurance companies know who's hurting who, and their actuaries show that Chiropractors have the lowest malpractice rates among all practitioners. Chiropractors pay approximately \$1,600 annually (56) compared to spine surgeons, who pay approximately \$71,000 to over \$200,000, (57) which clearly suggests the relative safety of care provided by Chiropractors, a fact never mentioned in the Chicken Little articles.

### Crying Wolf again

Part of the problem with this Chicken Little journalism about '*chiropractic causes strokes*' is that the mainstream media never gives the '*fair and balanced*' response to this issue from the Chiropractors' point of view. Indeed, have you ever read the research and expert opinions that I have cited here? Of course not, so the medical skills continue undeterred with their incendiary articles about the danger of cervical manipulation however remote it may be.

This is just too unlikely to pass off as coincidental on such an obscure topic. Indeed, considering the gigantic issues facing healthcare in America, such as the escalating medical costs causing personal bankruptcy, the tsunami of unnecessary surgeries, medical mistakes that kill nearly a million patients annually, the growing opioid addiction, and the battle over Obamacare, comparatively speaking the issue of stroke after manipulation is a small one, which makes one wonder why they bothered to revive an issue that affects so few?

For example, on August 7, 2014, the *American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Scientific Statement* issued another false alarm aimed to frighten the public '*Neck Manipulation*

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55. John J. Triano, *Current Concepts in Spinal Manipulation and Cervical Arterial Incidents* by (Jan 1, 2006)

56. National Chiropractic Mutual Insurance Company rate (2009)

57. The Burton Report, "Why Spine Care is at High Risk for Medical-Legal Suits," [www.burtonreport.com/infforensic/MedMalSpCommonCause.htm](http://www.burtonreport.com/infforensic/MedMalSpCommonCause.htm)

*May Be Associated With Stroke* by José Biller, MD, lead author, professor, and chair of neurology at the Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. (58)

Even its introduction admitted to the lack of credibility in his claim:

'Treatments involving neck manipulation may be associated with stroke, though it cannot be said with certainty that neck manipulation causes strokes, according to a new scientific statement published in the *American Heart Association's* journal *Stroke*'.

Ironically, Biller also admitted there is no link between SMT and stroke in his warning, making one wonder why this writer was crying wolf in the first place:

'Although a direct cause-and-effect link has not been established between neck manipulation and the risk of stroke, healthcare providers should inform patients of the association before they undergo neck manipulation'.

Journal editor Mark Schoene responded with a little push-back to this issue after the Biller article appeared in the news:

'But there is no smoking gun linking spinal manipulation conclusively to its development. Why the AHA and ASA performed this literature review now, or singled out spinal manipulation as the focus of the review, isn't clear'. (59)

While not clear to Schoene it is certainly clear to me this is just another attack by medical *Goodfellas* to whack the reputation of Chiropractors. Regrettably, these Chicken Little writers crying wolf continue to scare the public with false alarms in a complicit press that turns a blind eye to the actual facts.

Needless to say, the Biller article drew a critical response from the chiropractic profession. Christine Goertz DC, PhD and Dana Lawrence DC, MMedEd, MA, both senior faculty and research fellows at Palmer College of Chiropractic, responded to the *'half-truths and misleading statements'* of this yellow medical journalism:

Currently, the best basic science evidence available indicates that the strains placed on the vertebral artery during CMT (chiropractic manipulative therapy) are unlikely to cause a stroke, and the best clinical evidence available shows that a person is as likely to have seen a primary care medical physician as a doctor of Chiropractic in the seven days prior to experiencing a CD (cervical dissection).

As we critically assess our response, it is our opinion that the AHA statement mixes scientific facts with half-truths and misleading statements, leading people to ultimately arrive at the erroneous conclusion that it has been established CMT causes CD. If you look at the newspaper and blog headlines generated by this statement (e.g., *'How Safe Are the Vigorous Neck Manipulations Done by Chiropractors?'* (60) and *'Chiropractic Manipulation of Neck: Stroke Risk?'* (61), you realise this is precisely what happened when the statement was released.

The AHA white paper lists several events that are associated with CD. These include major and minor cervical trauma, use of oral contraceptives, sporting activities, stretching the neck, some neck movements, violent coughing or vomiting, and visiting a health care provider who administers spinal manipulation. Yet for some reason, the AHA chose to focus its statement on the single association within that list for which there is the strongest evidence against a causal relationship.

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58. <http://newsroom.heart.org/news/neck-manipulation-may-be-associated-with-stroke>

59. Schoene, Mark, Manipulation and Stroke, The BACKLetter, vol. 29, No. 10, October 2014; pp. 1

60. Berger S. "How Safe Are the Vigorous Neck Manipulations Done by Chiropractors?" The Washington Post, Jan. 6, 2014.

61. Thompson D. "Chiropractic Manipulation of Neck: Stroke Risk?" WebMD, Aug. 7, 2014.

By concentrating exclusively on the purported risk of CD following CMT, the AHA has missed an invaluable opportunity to educate both patients and practitioners of the incidence, warning signs, and broad range of factors associated with CD. We challenge the chiropractic profession to step up to the plate and take on this important task. (62)

The fact that the AHA did focus on chiropractic manipulation specifically instead of the many more likely causes of stroke once again speaks volumes that the real intent was not an 'opportunity to educate' as much as to take a cheap shot at chiropractors with its Chicken Little cry of false alarm.

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62. "CMT & Stroke Risk: Myth vs. Fact" by Christine Goertz, DC, PhD and Dana Lawrence, DC, M. Med. Ed., MA, Dynamic Chiropractic, November 1, 2014, Vol. 32, Issue 21