



World Chiropractic Alliance

www.worldchiropracticalliance.org

P.O. Box 3826, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067

800-347-1011

August 30, 2010

Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States
2101 E. Jefferson St.
Rockville, MD 20852

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this on behalf of the World Chiropractic Alliance and the 60,000 doctors of chiropractic whose interests it represents. We recently learned of your decision to exclude cervical Chiropractic Manipulative Treatment (CMT) from your policy coverage.

In doing so, you stated: "Chiropractic manipulation of the cervical spine is associated with vertebral artery dissection and stroke. The incidence is estimated at 1.3-5 events per 100,000 manipulations."

While I appreciate the fact that your company wishes to safeguard the well-being of patients who subscribe to your programs, this statement is totally inaccurate and is not based on current scientific findings.

I have enclosed numerous references to medical research that clearly shows that chiropractic has NOT been linked as a causative factor in any significant number of carotid and vertebral artery dissection. In fact, it has been proven to be far safer than conventional medical treatments.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to discredit chiropractic and discourage people from seeking care from doctors of chiropractic, some proponents of allopathic medicine -- and attorneys interested in filing spurious lawsuits -- continue to disseminate misleading information about a supposed link between cervical adjustments and strokes.

Numerous published scientific and medical studies indicate that the incidence of a cerebrovascular accident (CVA) or stroke is estimated at between 1 to 3 incidents per million adjustments.

One study covered a period of 28 years, while another involved reviewing about 110 million chiropractic visits. The results of all these studies show conclusively that the risk of stroke from a chiropractic adjustment is so small as to be statistically insignificant. It has been estimated that it is even less than that of "beauty parlor stroke syndrome" -- a rare occurrence triggered when a customer leans her head back on a sink to get her hair washed.

In reality, even the 1-3 incidents per million adjustments figures may be too high, since it is erroneous to equate correlation with cause. That is, if a person suffers a stroke after receiving a chiropractic adjustment, it is not necessarily proof that the adjustment caused the stroke. In an article entitled "Adjustments, Strokes, and Errors in Medicine" (*The Chiropractic Journal*, July

2000), Christopher Kent, D.C., explained, "The fact that a temporal relationship exists between two events does not mean that one caused the other."

In addition, medical researchers frequently misunderstand the critical differences between specific chiropractic adjustments and cervical manipulation. Doctors of chiropractic are highly trained in the use of the adjustment, which is the specific application of force to facilitate the body's correction of nerve interference. Manipulation is the forceful passive movement of a joint beyond its active limit of motion. Since it doesn't imply the use of precision, specificity or the correction of nerve interference, it is not synonymous with chiropractic adjustment.

Finally, many of the cases cited by medical researchers as being "chiropractic treatments" were actually spinal manipulations rendered by non-chiropractic practitioners. According a research report in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, "manipulations" administered by a Kung Fu practitioner, GPs, osteopaths, physiotherapists, a wife, a blind masseur, and an Indian barber had been incorrectly attributed to chiropractors.

The report explained that, "The words chiropractic and chiropractor have been incorrectly used in numerous publications dealing with SMT injury by medical authors, respected medical journals and medical organizations. In many cases, this is not accidental; the authors had access to original reports that identified the practitioner involved as a non-chiropractor. The true incidence of such reporting cannot be determined. Such reporting adversely affects the reader's opinion of chiropractic and chiropractors." (Terrett AGJ: Misuse of the literature by medical authors in discussing spinal manipulative therapy injury. *JMPT* 1995;18:203.)

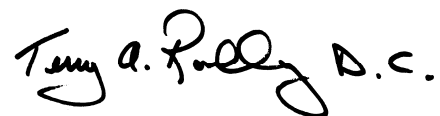
Even medical researchers have had to admit that chiropractic care carries far less of a stroke risk than medical treatment. "**Indeed, most interventions by allopathic physicians have a higher complication rate than chiropractic interventions,**" said Philip Lee, M.D., a co-investigator of a research survey presented at the American Heart Association's 19th International Joint Conference on Stroke and Cerebral Circulation.

Based on the scientific evidence readily available today, it is clear that chiropractic adjustments pose no significant risk of strokes and are far safer in this regard than most medical treatments.

The World Chiropractic Alliance therefore requests that Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States not only remove the new policy exclusion but issue a clarifying statement that the "warning" about chiropractic and strokes was in error.

I look forward to your response,

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry A. Rondberg D.C." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Terry A. Rondberg, DC
CEO, The World Chiropractic Alliance



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RESEARCH ON CHIROPRACTIC and STROKE PAGE 1

"Sudden Neck Movement and Cervical Artery Dissection: The Chiropractic Experience," Dr. Scott Haldeman et al. *CMAJ* 2001; 165 (7): 905--906

"The likelihood that a chiropractor will be made aware of an arterial dissection following cervical manipulation is approximately 1:8.06 million office visits, 1:5.85 million cervical manipulations, 1:1430 chiropractic practice years and 1:48 chiropractic practice careers. This is significantly less than the estimates of 1:500,000--1 million cervical manipulations calculated from surveys of neurologists."

"Stroke, Cerebral Artery Dissection, and Cervical Spine Manipulation Therapy," *Journal of Neurology*, Volume 249, Number 8, 1098-1104, DOI: 10.1007/s00415-002-0783-4:

An in-depth retrospective review of patient files found: stroke, particularly vertebrobasilar dissection, should be considered a random and unpredictable complication of any neck movement, including cervical manipulation.

"Risk of Vertebrobasilar Stroke and Chiropractic Care: Results of a Population-based Case-control and Case-crossover Study." *Spine* 2008 (Feb 15); 33 (4 Suppl): S176--183.

"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."

The Council on Chiropractic Practice

"The panel found no competent evidence that specific chiropractic adjustments cause strokes." ("Vertebral Subluxation in Chiropractic Practice. Council on Chiropractic Practice Clinical Practice Guideline No. 1." 1998.)

"Risk assessment of neurological and/or vertebrobasilar complications in the pediatric chiropractic patient." Pistolesse RA. *Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research* 1998;2(2):77-85.

Estimates the risk of neurological and/or vertebrobasilar complications in pediatric chiropractic to be approximately 1 in 250 million.

"The appropriateness of manipulation and mobilization of the cervical spine. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation 1996: xiv. (6).

The RAND corporation estimated that the risk of stroke from chiropractic adjustments was "one in a million."

RESEARCH ON CHIROPRACTIC and STROKE PAGE 2

"Safety in chiropractic practice. Part I: The occurrence of cerebrovascular accidents after manipulation to the neck in Denmark from 1978-1988," *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, 1996; 19: 371-7.)

Over a ten-year period, Danish researchers found only five cases of "irreversible CVA after chiropractic treatment." Based on this, they estimated a risk of one stroke per 1,320,000 neck adjustments.

"Neurologic complications following chiropractic manipulation: A survey of California neurologists," *Neurology* 1995; 45: 1213-5

Based on a survey of 64 California neurologists, Albers, M.D., estimated the stroke-chiropractic correlation to be "one in every 500,000 manipulations." Co-investigator Philip Lee, M.D. noted, "Indeed, most interventions by allopathic physicians have a higher complication rate than chiropractic interventions."

"A report on the occurrence of cervical cerebral vascular accidents in chiropractic practice." *Journal of the Canadian Chiropractic Association*, 1993; 37 (2): 104-6.

The author of a Canadian study found 13 documented CVAs related to chiropractic care in Canada, and no deaths, over a five-year period. Since some 50 million cervical adjustments were given by Canadian chiropractors during that time period, he concluded that a reasonable estimate of risk was one serious neurological complication per 3 million neck adjustments.

"Complications in Manual Medicine: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Manual Medicine*, 1991; 6: 89-92

Researchers in Holland concluded that the overall rate of complications from chiropractic adjustments was one in 518,886.

"Chiropractic therapy: diagnosis and treatment," Aspen Publishers, 1990: 61.

No strokes or any other significant complications were found during an examination of 168,000 cervical adjustments during a 28-year period.

"Vertebral Artery syndrome," published in the book "Upper cervical syndrome: chiropractic diagnosis and treatment.," Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1988: 195-222.

A review of more than a half-million treatments over a nine-year period at the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College outpatient clinic found no incidents of strokes or serious incident.

"How dangerous is manipulation to the cervical spine?" *Manual Medicine* 1985; 2: 1-4.

A survey which included 203 Swiss practitioners and an estimated 1.5 million cervical manipulations, found a rate of one serious complication per 400,000 cervical manipulations, without any reported deaths.

"Complications arising from manipulation of the cervical spine," *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* 1980; 3: 213-19.

Not a single case of vertebral artery stroke or serious injury was found during a study which involved approximately 5 million cervical manipulations from 1965 to 1980 at The National College of Chiropractic Clinic in Chicago.