

8 MYTHS ABOUT CHIROPRACTORS

By: Dr. Jennifer T. Murphy

The mainstream media, sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, is very quick to berate the chiropractic profession and do little to promote the vast benefits we offer.

They have campaigned for years to prevent us from practicing, but luckily, the public has spoken. I am proud to be a choir/quacker/bone cracker...chiropractor and here's why.

MYTH #1: Chiropractors go to school for six weeks and then start to practice. I wish!!! Chiropractors are required to complete a minimum of two years of undergraduate work (most do more) and then complete 3 ½ years of chiropractic school. Chiropractic school is highly specialized and is year round with a 30+ hour credit load per semester; that is twice the average credit load for a college student. Chiropractors are highly trained in neuromusculoskeletal disorders and have more hours of X-ray training than most MD's.

MYTH #2: Chiropractors kill and paralyze people. Are you kidding me? If that ever happened in a chiropractic office, we'd be closed down so fast my head would spin. We are very well trained at what we do and there are no documented cases of chiropractors causing paralysis. There is an extremely small risk of a stroke, but statistically, you have a greater chance of having a stroke getting your hair washed. A chiropractic adjustment, done properly, cannot cause fracture or paralysis unless the spine is cancerous or disintegrating from disease. Both are easily recognized by symptoms and X-ray.

MYTH #3: Chiropractors are glorified massage therapists. Although I personally incorporate some massage in my office, this statement is degrading to both chiropractors and massage therapists. Massage therapists require 1-2 years of schooling and in North Carolina, must take a state board exam. Chiropractors have the school requirements I mentioned earlier, but also have four sets of National Board exams, plus state exams. The two professions do work extremely well together.

MYTH #4: Chiropractors are not real doctors. Nope, I'm artificial. By the letter of the law, I am a chiropractic physician. I do have a scope of practice that I must follow and a code of ethics. I do not prescribe medications or perform surgeries, but I am legally liable to interview, diagnose and treat patients to the best of my ability. Only doctors are legally allowed to diagnose patients.

MYTH #5: Chiropractors believe that adjustments cure everything. If you come across a chiropractor who believes this...RUN! All healthcare has its place, but chiropractors do believe that many conditions do not require medications or surgery. Our philosophy to healthcare is that alignment of the spinal bones relieves pressure off the spinal nerves. This, in turn, allows the body to use its own innate intelligence to heal itself and prevent injury and illness.

MYTH #6: Chiropractors are con artist out to make a quick buck. If we are, we are so good. We've been pulling off this con since 1895 and are the fastest growing healthcare profession. Chiropractic has been proven to be effective in study after study. The American Medical Association and the media have done their very best to disprove chiropractic and belittle the profession. Instead, we continue to grow and help people live better lives.

MYTH #7: Chiropractors are dangerous. This is easily dispelled when you look at malpractice costs. Chiropractors pay, on average \$1000-\$2000/year for malpractice insurance. The average family MD pays over \$12,000 and the money goes up exponentially as MD's specialize. If we were so dangerous and hurt so many patients, our malpractice insurance would reflect that.

MYTH #8: Chiropractors make you come back forever. This is totally up to you. Healthcare should always be the decision of the patient. Many choose to have continued chiropractic care as an insurance policy against illness, but if you are constantly seeing a chiropractor and not getting the results you want, then you need to re-evaluate your care. Your health should never be about money.

I hope this article puts to rest some of the questions and ridiculous myths that surround my profession. We are building bridges with MD's, DO's, and PT's so that the goal is not money or pride, but the health of the patient. We all have our strengths and weaknesses, but as long as the patient continues to be well, we have all done our jobs well.