

CEREBRAL PALSY AFFECTED BY CHIROPRACTIC

By Dr. Derek Conte

As a volunteering doctor on a recent chiropractic mission trip to the Dominican Republic in January, I saw hundreds of people receiving chiropractic care first hand and adjusted hundreds of people myself. On that trip, 49 Doctors and students of chiropractic visited dozens of churches in small groups and adjusted as many as 7,000 needy Dominicans. In the evenings, we'd review the day and share some of the small miracles we witnessed through the power of chiropractic. I'd like to share an experience I had when adjusting a 5-year-old child named, David. He suffered from Cerebral Palsy and was wheelchair-bound. According to his parents he had never spoken any words. (What follows is a bit technical, but you should get the gist of my rationale as to what happened.) When I assessed David, both his eyes were locked strongly in a left lateral gaze, forcing him to turn his head to the right to see me. He did not have good control of his body movements as is typical of CP, which results from oxygen deprivation to the brain. We put David on the table and in the face-up position one of his legs was one inch shorter than the other. His Atlas (first cervical vertebra) had an extreme left malposition, forcing his head into sharp right lateral flexion. The magnitude of this misalignment was alarming.

I adjusted the Atlas purely from left to right and the Axis (second cervical vertebra) counter-clockwise, according to my assessment. David appeared to be stunned and breathed quickly and then deeply several times. When he settled down we rechecked his legs. They had become equal in length, suggesting relaxation of the back muscles on the short side. When we got him up, his eyes began to hold center a few seconds at a time before they drifted back to the left again (this happened over and over again). This suggested that eye muscles that controlling lateral movement on the incompetent side were now receiving signals to maintain a normal gaze. However weak those muscles were, they were trying now. When he was leaving with his parents, David smiled and began to wave and say the words "Thank you, thank you..." and when I said, "Goodbye," he waved again and said, "Goodbye." His speech was imperfect, but finally the impetus to speak words in a coordinated way was there. His parents and I were overwhelmed.

Apparently, areas of David's brain that control eye movements and speech, particularly the frontal lobe, midbrain and Pons,

were favorably affected by the adjustments. How might this have happened? I feel it has to do with blood flow to the brain. I discussed my thinking with a patient of mine who is an orthopedic surgeon, and he agreed with my thinking as I expressed it to him in this way:



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Since Cerebral Palsy results from loss of oxygen to the brain, it is possible that circulation there was improved by the adjustment. Two important arteries called vertebral arteries, which account for 20% of the brain's blood supply, travel up the neck, following a tortuous path through and tightly around the Atlas before entering the brain. A significant malposition of the atlas could cause a stretching and impingement of one or both arteries, reducing blood flow and thus oxygen availability to the brain. Such malpositions of the upper cervical area can occur during a child's birth due to the very forceful extraction process with the neck being twisted and the head used as a handle to extract the child. The adjustment of the Atlas and Axis to a more normal position could have reduced such an impingement (if one existed) of the vertebral arteries and restored blood flow to the hungry parts of the brain.

An important thing to mention here is that chiropractic is concerned with optimizing nervous system function and not removing joint or back pain. The intention of the chiropractic adjustment of the spine is to facilitate the clearing of the nervous system first. Since the nervous system controls every muscle, organ and gland in the body, it is possible to help the patient heal from a wide range of dysfunctions -- somatic or organic -- that are caused by nerve interference. That joint and back pain tend to be removed in this process is a collateral benefit of the primary intention and speaks to the marvelous harmony and integration of the human body.

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