

A Brief History and Philosophy of Chiropractic

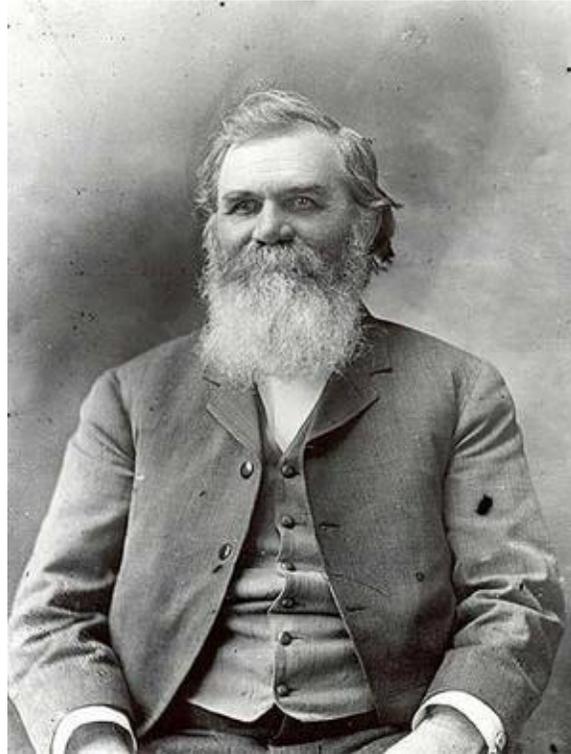


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Daniel David Palmer
Founder of Chiropractic

By Dr. R.J. Peters

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Discovery of Chiropractic

The year 1895 marked the beginning of a new, alternative direction in health care, as Daniel David Palmer discovered that specific adjustments of the spine enabled the body to heal itself more effectively and efficiently than any methods previously known.

Palmer, a self-educated magnetic healer of his day, developed a system of spinal adjusting, which he named chiropractic - from the Greek word "cheiros," for hand, and "praktikos," for practice. Literally, it means "done by hand."

Most people who know the history of chiropractic also have heard the well known story of how D.D. Palmer restored the hearing of a janitor where he worked, Harvey Lillard, simply by adjusting (realigning) a vertebra in Lillard's spine. Most accounts report this as an instantaneous recovery.

The whole incident threw the medical profession into an uproar, though, because, they pointed out, there is no way Palmer could have affected the nerve that controls hearing. The auditory nerve is a Cranial Nerve and never leaves the skull. There is no way it could have been "pinched." Palmer, a magnetic healer at the time, must have been dreaming, lying, or taking advantage of a coincidence, they accused.

He and his work were immediately discredited, and Palmer was treated like a criminal, setting the stage for all future encounters with anyone claiming to cure any disease or condition with this new thing called chiropractic. Many dedicated men and women spent time in prison in the early years of the profession for "practicing medicine without a license," despite their protests to the contrary. It was not medicine they were performing, nor did they want to.

However, it wasn't until the latter half of the 20th century that all 50 states finally had drafted laws to license chiropractic as a separate and distinct profession.

Relentless attempts for more than 100 years to eliminate chiropractic have failed, too, for one indisputable reason: It works. If it didn't, it would have faded into the yellowed pages of the history of quackery long ago, on its own, with no help from its detractors.

The millions of patients who found health with the help of chiropractic methods could not be silenced, nor denied their right to use this system of alternative health care.

Why does it work? Contrary to medical thinking that it simply is a form of placebo, where one merely believes they feel better, and therefore does, chiropractic care has made possible the recovery of individuals without belief systems in place, such as infants, toddlers, the unconscious, and even animals. Such individuals are not vulnerable to the "psychology" of persuasion.

This author has personally facilitated a return to health for exactly the same kinds of patients just listed. And it was done without any psychological mastery whatsoever, having had no training in that area, nor any natural talent for it.

The basis for chiropractic success is one of sound physiological fundamentals, unchangeable by beliefs or pretense.

It works because the body works. If one assists the body to do what it is already trying to do, the results will be positive, and health will ensue.

Why Chiropractic Works

If the body gets out of balance for any of a myriad of reasons, the body will automatically (if there is no interference) make every attempt to right itself. For example, a laborer who lifts a load too heavy for his abilities may strain a number of muscles.

The muscles are attached to bones. That is how bones are made to move, in fact. A lifeless, bare skeleton cannot move on its own. It must have live muscles attached to its separate units, contracting, to draw them toward each other, such as bending the elbow, or the knee, causing a foot or hand to move toward the other part of the limb.

The stimulus that causes the muscles to contract and cause such movement is called a nerve impulse. Nerve impulses are pretty much a system of electrical charges that travel along the nerves as directed by the brain's instructions.

If anything gets in the way, the charge, or impulse, may not reach its destination -- the muscle -- either partially or not at all. If the interference is complete, it may be said to be paralysis. If there is no sensation, no feeling, and there is numbness, it may mean only a portion of the nerve is working. This also could result in weakness or lack of coordination.

Nerves, of course, do much more than instruct muscles when to contract and relax. They also tell the liver how to complete its complex tasks. They provide the feedback systems to the organs, and work in synchronicity with the glandular, or endocrine, system to secrete the correct amounts of hormones, they tell the digestive system to perform various functions, and so on.

Nothing works all by itself, and those who feel the body is at the total mercy of the hormonal system are sadly mistaken. It's a complicated interaction of ALL systems, and all are dependent on one another.

So what could possibly get in the way of a nerve impulse? And how can a cranial nerve, for example, be affected?

Let's start with bony misalignment. Any joint in the body can be compromised by injury or stress, thereby losing its ability to function normally. It can result in stiffness and/or pain, so as to interfere with the normal movement of that joint. If muscles are injured, then it becomes difficult to contract correctly in order to move a joint.

The Nature of Misalignment

If muscles contract continuously, as in spasm, they are not able to relax, and again, the joint will not move correctly. There may be pain.

If this occurs along the spine, where tiny muscles are responsible for movement of the spinal joints, called vertebrae, there may be unnatural contraction along one side of the spine, possibly drawing it into a curve or bend, or a listing to one side. Or there may only be "knots" of contraction here and there, usually painful, as specific vertebrae are pulled out of their normal (or correct) positions. As the body then tries to right itself, it makes an attempt to rebalance. Thus, if a muscle group is contracted on one side, the body will contract muscles on the other side to counteract it.

This is done automatically... unless someone has interfered with the process. Such interference may include drugs. Muscle relaxants presumably solve this problem, but in reality, they only add to it. Because actual balance is not achieved, due to an unnatural relaxation of muscles, those that have been stressed into contraction will remain out of balance.

Contrary to popular belief, no drug knows which muscles to cause to relax. It is a chemical, and has no intelligence to select a specific muscle group. Therefore, it relaxes all muscles with certain properties, whether they are in the affected group or not. Thus, all *skeletal* muscles will respond to drugs that affect skeletal muscle tissue. All *smooth* muscles (such as digestive organs may contain) will react to drugs that affect that kind of tissue. The location in the body is not a key to the effects, but, rather, the histological makeup of the tissues themselves.

Meanwhile, with an ongoing imbalance, especially if located in the spine, the vertebrae may remain slightly misaligned. It does not require a major misalignment, such as a dislocation, to cause impingement on a spinal nerve at a specific vertebral location.

The impingement is rarely a frank, bony compression (called a "pinch"), though that can happen, but more usually, it is a slight irritation of the spinal nerve root area... a constant little irritating sensation on the nerve, resulting in mild to moderate discomfort, or even a change in the chemical properties of those tissues locally... and possibly a change in one's posture as the body attempts to work around the problem.

Then, if not corrected, either naturally on its own, or with help from an outside "assistant," such as a chiropractor, the nerve must learn to adapt to the constant irritation. The body will then make various changes in that area, such as bone spurs (a method of eventually bonding vertebrae together to prevent movement and further irritation there), or ossification (depositing calcium) in the affected and surrounding tissues, or shriveling a nerve or muscle, to remove it from the pain cycle.

If a nerve is thus compromised, whatever it was serving may suffer, too. An oversimplified example may be that of a nerve that "tells" an organ what to do and when to do it. If it can't get that message out, the organ may not know what it is supposed to do. *Or, perhaps that nerve was serving a system that feeds and nourishes cranial nerves.*

Any function in the body can be compromised by a loss of normal nerve signal delivery.

Anything Can Cause Anything

An early 20th century chiropractor, Dr. James Drain, wrote a book called *Anything Can Cause Anything*. It was based on this knowledge, but has been largely ignored. His observations of these principles remain sound, however.

The bottom line is that our bodies react to various kinds of stress - physical, mental or chemical - by creating responses dictated by natural processes that may in themselves be uncomfortable or cause secondary problems... even disease.

Today's chiropractors receive about the same education as medical students, and for nearly as long, depending on areas of specialty for either. Gone are the days of the simple apprenticeship that produced medical doctors, and gone are the 9-month courses in chiropractic. Additionally, there has been much independent scientific research, initially hoped to disprove chiropractic, which has instead completely validated the science of chiropractic and its principles.



Dr. R.J. Peters is a retired Doctor of Chiropractic, who, during a 25-year career, helped thousands of patients (conscious and unconscious, animal and human, child and adult) achieve restoration of their health through natural means.

For more information:

<http://alternativehealthquestions.blogspot.com>

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