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Stroke report proves media, medical bias against chiropractic, says World Chiropractic Alliance

The media feeding frenzy following a May 13 study in the journal *Neurology* is a glaring example of how the news media is manipulated by the medical industry to help destroy chiropractic. That was the conclusion of the World Chiropractic Alliance (WCA) after a relatively insignificant research report was given massive publicity this week.

In 1990, in *Wilk vs. AMA*, the American Medical Association was found guilty of conspiring with other medical organizations in a "lengthy, systematic, successful and unlawful boycott" designed to eliminate chiropractic as a competitor.

According to Dr. Terry A. Rondberg, WCA president, the news media has become a co-conspirator in medicine's war against chiropractic. "Newspapers, magazines, the Internet, television and news shows are using press releases from the medical and pharmaceutical industries without bothering to ask questions about the validity of the research," Dr. Rondberg accused. "The court ruling prevents the AMA from attacking us openly, so the campaign by the medical industry has gone underground, with the media doing the bulk of its dirty work."

The *Neurology* study, which was publicized in the print and broadcast media around the world, involved interviews with just 51 stroke victims. Although there was no definitive evidence linking them to chiropractic and the researchers admitted the strokes in question - called Vertebral Artery Dissection (VAD) - were extremely rare, news headlines screamed that chiropractic causes strokes. "Such irresponsible journalism is further degrading the integrity of the news media at a time when its credibility is already strained to the breaking point," Rondberg said.

Numerous prior studies, some involving thousands of patients, contradict the *Neurology* findings. "Documents on the WCA website contain references to numerous research studies showing the alleged link between strokes and chiropractic is completely bogus," he added.

Timothy Feuling, president of Chiropractic Benefit Services, which insures chiropractors for malpractice, says the company hasn't had a single claim involving a stroke in years. "It's almost unheard of. The reason chiropractors pay relatively little for malpractice coverage is that chiropractic is extremely safe."

In contrast, "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.

In addition, studies such as the *Neurology* report fail to prove any real link between strokes and chiropractic care. "The fact that a temporal relationship exists between two events does not mean that one caused the other," explained chiropractic researcher Christopher Kent, D.C.

The World Chiropractic Alliance also condemned the media and the medical industry for failing to distinguish between "spinal manipulations" and chiropractic adjustments. A report in the *Journal of Manipulative and*

Physiological Therapeutics, noted that "manipulations" administered by medical doctors, osteopaths, physiotherapists, and others had been incorrectly attributed to chiropractors.

The media's double standard was made obvious by the unwarranted publicity given to the Neurology study. Medical treatment and drug errors account for more than 100,000 deaths each year, according to a report in the April 1998 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association. Another 350,000 adverse drug reactions occur in U.S. nursing homes each year, many of which are fatal. "Yet, the media practically ignores these statistics in its rush to promote medical treatment and drugs," Rondberg charged.

The reason for the harassment by the medical and pharmaceutical industries is evident. Chiropractic offers a drug-free, cost-effective way to improve health by correcting vertebral subluxations, which interfere with normal nerve function. The shift to chiropractic from medicine cuts deeply into M.D. pockets. "Millions of people are turning to chiropractic for their health and wellness care," Rondberg explained. "That's millions of dollars that won't go for risky medical treatment or expensive drugs. The medical and drug industries have a strong incentive to scare people away from chiropractic."

Money may also be a prime reason why the media is such a willing partner in the campaign against chiropractic. Drug companies and other medical firms spend more than \$3 billion yearly to fill newspaper and magazine pages, saturate radio and television airwaves, and blanket the Internet with ads.

"When you depend on the medical and drug trades for much of your income, it's easy to fall into the trap of being their lackeys and using their propaganda without asking hard questions," Rondberg pointed out. "If the news media ever hopes to regain its credibility, it needs to re-examine its practice of sensationalizing reports that attack chiropractic. The WCA challenges the news media to do some real investigative reporting and tell the truth about the ongoing campaign against chiropractic by the medical and drug industries."