



**AUSTRALIAN  
CHIROPRACTORS  
ASSOCIATION**

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25 October 2018

Ellie McDonald  
Health & Healthcare Editor  
Australian Women's Weekly  
54-58 Park Steet  
Sydney, New South Wales 2000

Via email: [emcdonald@bauer-media.com.au](mailto:emcdonald@bauer-media.com.au)

Dear Ms McDonald,

I refer you to “Ask the Doctor with Professor Kerryn Phelps”, Australian Women’s Weekly, 11 October 2018. Dr Phelps was asked “what’s the difference between a chiropractor and osteopath and which would be better for treating a stiff neck from sitting at a desk? V.W.”

More and more, evidence supports early referral and assessment of musculoskeletal pain patients to an appropriately qualified musculoskeletal clinician such as a chiropractor, osteopath or physiotherapist. Not only are these clinicians appropriately trained to treat musculoskeletal pain patients, they are also trained to facilitate health promotion and lifestyle advice, rehabilitation and patient education.

Several recent studies provide valuable information from the health consumers who seek care from Australian chiropractors. In one study, participants reported a high prevalence of back pain (71.1%), neck pain (55.6%) and headaches (45.5%). A second study found the main reasons for chiropractic use to be back pain (65.7%), neck pain (20.7%) and headaches (9.3%), along with general health and wellbeing (32.3%).

When treating patients, chiropractors are no different to any other health professional (including GPs). They make an assessment and develop a treatment plan in accordance with the needs of the patient and provide advice on future management strategies.

There is a common misconception that chiropractic care involves a singular therapeutic technique – spinal manipulation (spinal adjustment). Chiropractors however, use a patient centred, multi-modal model of care. Most Australian chiropractors provide a therapeutic approach to care that incorporates a range of manual therapies which may include spinal adjustment, but also includes mobilisation, muscle and soft tissue techniques along with

electrotherapies, exercise prescription, rehabilitation, nutritional recommendations and lifestyle advice. These have been shown to be of benefit to people with a range of musculoskeletal conditions.

In Australia, chiropractors share a common tertiary education pathway with osteopaths and physiotherapists and chiropractic education involves undergraduate and/or masters-level university training over five years.

All accredited chiropractic programs in Australia include units in basic and clinical sciences. Also included are units in physical therapy, physical rehabilitation, radiology, nutrition, paediatrics, geriatrics, public health and evidence-based practice.

As with other primary healthcare professions, chiropractic pre-professional training requires a significant proportion of the curricula to be clinical subjects related to evaluating and caring for patients. As part of professional training, final-year students must also complete a minimum of a one-year supervised clinical internship.

This prepares graduates with the diagnostic and management skills necessary to manage a range of health conditions within their scope of practice, and to deliver public health education within a biopsychosocial framework (e.g. healthy lifestyle management).

Chiropractic education is integrative and supportive of collaboration with other healthcare professions when appropriate. Registered chiropractors must complete mandatory continuing education each year in order to maintain registration and practice as a non-pharmacological, non-surgical spine care and musculoskeletal-allied healthcare professional.

Finally, your readers should understand that chiropractic is a low-risk health profession. Serious adverse events are very rare and should be considered in context with the large numbers of people who enjoy the health benefits of seeing a chiropractor every day. In Australia alone, there are up to 300,000 visits to chiropractors each week and the chiropractic profession enjoys a high patient satisfaction rate.

If you would like to speak with us about the content of this letter, or make additional enquiries, please contact Bernard Rupasinghe (Policy & Public Affairs Manager) on (02) 8844 0400 or email [bernard.rupasinghe@chiropractors.asn.au](mailto:bernard.rupasinghe@chiropractors.asn.au).

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Anthony Coxon**

President

Australian Chiropractors Association