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The Lancet: Assessment of diclofenac or spinal manipulative therapy, or both, in addition to recommended first-line treatment for acute low back pain: a randomised controlled trial.

The study published in The Lancet, attempted to investigate whether the addition of NSAIDs or spinal manipulation, or both, would result in faster recovery for patients with acute low back pain receiving first line care

Tony Metcalfe, president of the British Chiropractic Association comments on the findings:

“The study looked at spinal manipulative therapy carried out by 15 physiotherapists in Australia with a minimum qualification of a graduate diploma in manipulative therapy. No direct comparison can be made from the results of the aforementioned study and the treatment offered by BCA chiropractors for a number of reasons:

- The study did not address chiropractic only spinal mobilisation carried out by physiotherapists. The majority of participants had low-velocity mobilisation techniques and only 5% experienced high velocity techniques. Chiropractic manipulation is based predominantly on high velocity techniques, so the results are therefore not comparable with chiropractic treatment
- There is no indication to suggest that the physiotherapists are specialist manipulative practitioners as BCA chiropractors are - the results could well have been different had chiropractors been involved with this study rather than physiotherapists
- The level of training and education is not comparable. The British Chiropractic Association only accepts graduates who have undergone a minimum of a four year full-time internationally-accredited degree course at an internationally-recognised college of chiropractic education
- The sample size is very limited and potentially unrepresentative:
 - Spinal manipulation was carried out by just 15 physiotherapists
 - Furthermore only 240 patients were included in the study and these in turn were recruited by just 19 GPs from 14 general practices
- Spinal manipulation is just part of a package of care offered by BCA chiropractors which also includes lifestyle & posture advice, rehabilitation &

specific exercises. To fully assess the effectiveness of the treatment the whole package needs to be evaluated

“The BCA was, however, encouraged to see that no participants reported serious adverse reactions associated with spinal manipulation therapy, which further reinforces the fact that spinal manipulation is a safe form of treatment. The vast majority of chiropractic patients are suffering from lower back pain or neck pain, and when it comes to back pain, there is no single treatment that has been researched more than chiropractic, and the results speak volumes. In fact, there is more evidence-based research to support chiropractic treatment than for any other complementary disciplines¹.”

Press enquiries: Julie Doyle, Publicasity. Tel: 020 7632 2407/07920 528 859

Email: jdoyle@publicasity.co.uk

Notes to editors:

Parallels can be drawn from this study with the results of the Meade Trial (1990) BMJ 2 June 1990, Vol.300 - pages 1431-1437, *Low back pain of mechanical origin: randomised comparison of chiropractic and hospital outpatient treatment* which compared chiropractic and hospital outpatient treatment for managing low back pain of mechanical origin and found that "chiropractic almost certainly confers worthwhile, long term benefit in comparison with hospital outpatient management" (physiotherapy). These findings were endorsed by the follow-up Meade trial published in the BMJ Vol.311 on 5 August 1995 which further indicated that "those treated by chiropractic derive more benefit and long term satisfaction than those treated by hospitals" (physiotherapy).

¹ Meade Trial (1990) BMJ 2 June 1990, Vol.300 - pages 1431-1437