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Peer Reviewed Journals


   One hundred consecutive patients with low back and/or lower extremity pain had the clinical data, including history, diagnosis, treatment and results of conservative manipulative therapy, collected and tabulated on an IBM 370/138 computer at Indiana-Purdue University in Fort Wayne, Indiana, utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) based on a standardized examination form. Various congenital, developmental and ergonomic factors in low back pain patients were collected and correlated for combinations of factors leading to back pain. Treatment methods and response to treatment as to time and patient visit numbers were determined. The frequency of congenital anomalies was found and those effecting or not effecting low back pain onset determined. Overall, 50% relief of low back and leg pain was obtained in 15.95 days and 10.8 visits average; maximum relief was found in 41.2 days, or 16.1 treatments.

   A chiropractic multi-center observational pilot study to compile statistics on the examination procedures, diagnosis, types of treatment rendered, results of treatment, number of day of care, and number of treatment required to arrive at a
50% and a maximum clinical improvement was collected on 576 patients with low back and/or leg pain. The purpose was to determine the congenital and developmental changes in patients with low back and/or leg pain, the combinations of such anomalies, the accuracy of orthodox diagnostic tests in assessing low back pain, ergonomic factors affecting onset, and, ultimately, the specific difficulty factors encountered in treating the various conditions seen in the average chiropractor’s office. For all conditions treated, the average number of day to attain maximum improvement was 43 and the number of visits was 19. It was concluded that this study provided useful data for assessment of routine chiropractic office based diagnosis and treatment of related conditions; however, further controlled studies are necessary for validation of specific parameters.

A negative myelogram but a positive CT for an L5 disc protrusion is presented. Five months of medical care preceded chiropractic care; the insurance company involvement in a case where treatment mode is changed from usual orthodox medical procedures of epidural steroid injection and physical therapy to chiropractic distraction manipulation is detailed. Finally, the clinical outcome of the case is provided.
At the end of 6 weeks of care the patient returned to his full work duties as a truck driver. His range of motion of the thoracolumbar spine were full and normal and hi straight leg raises were positive right at 70 degrees and left at 60 degrees. He had taut hamstring muscle that required constant stretching so as to not mimic a positive straight leg raise sign. This case shows that time off work and cost were both reduced by chiropractic care.


A literature review of the incidence and effects of manipulation on intervertebral disc protrusion is given. A case presented has a 14% reduction of the disc bulge following manipulative care with complete relief of sciatic and low back pain. A system to evaluate the size of disc herniation in computed tomography scans performed before and after manipulative treatment of disc protrusions is offered. Stenosis, with the critical compounded factors of vertebral canal size, dural sac cross-sectional area and soft tissue stenosis in protrusion of the ligamentum flavum and disc, as well as degenerative facet joint changes, is discussed to illustrate the complexity surrounding nerve root compression etiology.
Understanding this integration of causative factors can help to explain low back
symptoms and outline effective treatment plans.

The exercise and smoking habits of low back or leg pain sufferers vs persons not having low back or leg pain are compared. The type, frequency and length of exercise is determined from a study of 576 low back or leg pain sufferers compared to 50 persons who state they are symptomatic. The same was done for smoking habits. Thirty-three percent of low back or leg pain sufferers smoked as compared to 14% of those without pain. Forth-seven percent of low back or leg pain sufferers as compared to 86% of non-sufferers exercised regularly.
The level of physical activity and general exercise has been found to improve strength, mobility and endurance; this might prevent future back injury. This study is to determine difference in the exercise habits of persons with low back and/or leg pain vs. those who do not have pain, with the intention being to see if pain sufferers exercise less.

The incidence of a C7 spondylolisthesis has never been reported, and this paper shows the presence of C7 and L4 degenerative spondylolisthesis in a 66-yr-old female; no report of this combined problem has been reported. The clinical findings of the patient are given as well as treatment protocol.
In clinical practice, the finding of degenerative spondylolisthesis should be understood as being best handled conservatively, as it rarely causes neurological deficit nor requires surgery.


Ten true spondylolisthesis patients, nine with the lesion at L5 and one at L3, were tested by vertical suspension radiography compared to neutral lateral weight-bearing x-ray to determine translational segmental instability. Cases were classed as unstable (high instability) if over 3 mm of translation of the spondylolisthetic segment occurred and as stable (low instability) if less than 3 mm of motion was seen. Chiropractic distraction adjustment was applied in each case, and the response to care was evaluated by subjective rating of pain relief. Results found that all five patients with stable spondylolisthesis cases obtained 75% or greater relief from chiropractic adjustment of the type used by the author, whereas one with the unstable variety experienced over 75% relief while the other four had less
than 50% relief of pain. As defined in this paper, stable true spondylolisthesis seems to respond better than the unstable variety.

This study compares the findings of plain film x-ray and computed CT examination in the diagnosis of facet orientation and the presence of tropism. Twenty consecutive patients having lumbar disc disease with sciatica were studied using plain x-ray as well as CT scanning. A chiropractic radiologist read the films to determine if facet facings were sagittally, semi-sagittally, or coronally oriented on both CT and plain x-ray study. CT was accepted as the most accurate method to determine the true facet orientation, and plain x-ray interpretation of facet orientation was compared to the CT reading. There was a statistically significant relationship in diagnosing tropism between plain film x-ray and CT readings, with a predictive accuracy that ranged from 58-84% across the three segmental levels. However, the exact concordance of plain film x-ray and CT readings for right and left facet facings was very low. This raises the question of how the profession defines diagnostic accuracy.

Demographic, clinical and radiographic findings were collected for 424 consecutive low back and/or leg pain patients receiving chiropractic treatment at seven participating centers. A standardized, 293-variable history and examination form was collected for each patient and they were classified into one or more of 15 clinical categories. Outcome measures included the response by days and treatments to attain maximum relief. For the entire patient populations, the average number of days to maximal improvement was 27, with a mean of 11 treatments having been administered over this time. Eight percent of this group of patients reported good to excellent relief of pain.
Among individual categories, patients with an L5 transitional segment had the best response (95% good to excellent outcome, while L4-L5 nuclear prolapse/free fragment patients had the worst response rates (57% good to excellent). Patients with nuclear protrusion required a longer treatment period and more visits than those with spondylolisthesis, facet syndrome, or spondyloarthritis. These results are discussed in terms of other reports of nonsurgical care as well as the natural history of low back pain. These data may be expected to aid in the design of future randomized controlled studies into the efficacy of chiropractic manipulation.


Lumbar intraspinal extradural synovial cyst is among the more rare, yet well-documented compressive neuropathies that present with low back and/or leg pain. The current base of knowledge in the medical literature concerning this interesting condition is presented, and the chiropractic protocol and treatment use in this one case of a lumbar synovial cyst.

Lumbar intraspinal extradural synovial cysts are of a facetal degenerative etiology and may be referred to by a variety of names - hypertrophic synovitis, cysts of the ligamentum flavum, synovial cysts, ganglion cysts. Tissue studies demonstrate that these cysts contain a variety of components, including reactive fibrous connective tissue, dense fibrous connective tissue, hyperplastic synovial membrane, and fine calcifications. Such a cyst must be thought of in the differential diagnosis of an individual presenting clinically with LBP and leg pain, particularly in the over 50 category. Clinical examination, corollary diagnostic imaging - CT and MRI - make the diagnosis.

The definitive treatment of intraspinal cysts in the current literature is surgical laminectomy. However, the authors recommend the possibility of a conservative, noninvasive approach to the care of the cysts via chiropractic distraction manipulation in conjunction with the appropriate physical therapy modalities


Chiropractic physicians see patient with spinal pain of pathologic origin. Worsening of back pain after manipulation in a 16-year-old girl alerted the treating chiropractic physician to further diagnostic workup to include magnetic resonance imaging of the spine. Eosinophilic granuloma was diagnosed and the proper referral for care was made. The case stresses the importance of recognizing contraindicatory signs to spinal manipulation and the need for proper
interdisciplinary care of such patients. Proper diagnostic and treatment protocols for eosinophilic granuloma are presented.


An overview of Cox* distraction manipulation protocols is presented including diagnosis and treatment decision making in low back pain and sciatica cases and proper utilization of flexion distraction in treating lumbar spine and lower extremity pain. In addition, the outcome of 1,000 cases involving low back and/or leg pain treated with chiropractic adjusting (92% utilizing flexion distraction) is presented.

A qualitative clinical and literature review provides the basis of the overview of diagnostic and treatment protocols. A descriptive case series design was used to collect outcome information on 1,000 patients with low back and/or leg pain; patients were pooled from two separate studies. Patients were treated by 30 different chiropractors, and a minimum of 20 cases was supplied by each physician. A descriptive review of cases showed that less than 4% of patients with low back or leg pain were candidates for surgery. Less than 9% of patients reached the chronic stage of care. The mean number of days to maximum improvement under care was 29, and the average number of treatments to maximum improvement was 12.

The results of this study provide some evidence for the use of chiropractic management, particularly flexion distraction manipulation, in the treatment of back pain problems due to a variety of mechanical causes.


When undiagnosed abdominal pain is present, spinal tumor should be considered one possible diagnosis.


Chiropractic distraction manipulation and physiological therapeutic care relieved 2 patients with low back and radicular pain attributed to MRI-confirmed synovial cysts of the lumbar spine. This treatment may be an initial conservative treatment option for synovial cysts with careful patient monitoring for progressive neurologic deficit which would necessitate surgery. Distraction manipulation may be a safe and effective conservative treatment of synovial cyst causing radicular pain; further data collection of clinical outcomes is warranted.

In patients with persistent gluteal and sciatica-like pain, especially when centered in the retrotrochanteric region, the gemelli-obturato internus muscle complex and associated bursae should be considered as a possible source of the pain.

http://www.journals.elsevierhealth.com/periodicals/ymmt/article/PIIS016147540500326X/fulltext
The movement of the nucleus pulposus is unpredictable in the degenerated disk. As chiropractors, we treat degenerated disks and need to be aware of their behavior. The intervertebral disk is probably the most common source of chronic low back pain. Tolerance testing before applying manipulation to the patient's spine is prudent because of the unpredictable nature of the disk.

Patients with radiculopathy did significantly better with FD. There were no significant differences between groups on the Roland Morris and SF-36 outcome measures. Overall, flexion–distraction provided more pain relief than active exercise; however, these results varied based on stratification of patients with and without radiculopathy and with and without recurrent symptoms. The subgroup analysis provides a possible explanation for contrasting results among randomized clinical trials of chronic low back pain treatments and these results also provide guidance for future work in the treatment of chronic low back pain.

During a one-year follow-up, participants previously randomized to physical therapy attended significantly more healthcare visits than those participants who received chiropractic care.

In this first trial on flexion distraction care, flexion distraction was found to be more effective in reducing pain for 1 year when compared to a form of physical therapy.

Chiropractic Technique 1999; 11(1):1-17
A Grand Rounds discussion of a patient suffering from severe low back pain with
pain radiating into the left thigh. The patient occasionally gets "stuck" in a position where he is leaning forward and to the right, and he must slowly work out his back in order to straighten up again. Dr. Cox discusses the examination of the patient, the possible pain generators for the patient's pain, and the Cox Distraction Adjusting procedures recommended for the case.

Algorithms of decision making and treatment protocol are presented for Cox® Distraction diagnosis and care of an acute low back pain patient. As well, discussion of potential sources of the pain is presented. Many references cited.

A 34-year-old female presented to a chiropractic office with severe, unremitting, cervical, shoulder, and arm pain of several months' duration. Past medical history, clinical evaluation, and plain-film radiographs revealed findings consistent with Klippel-Feil syndrome. The radiographs revealed a C2/3 block vertebrae, atlas assimilation, and premature degenerative changes consistent with the syndrome. Treatment consisted of cervical flexion-distraction manipulation and adjunctive therapies. This patient felt relief after the first treatment and experienced a complete resolution of her symptoms after eight treatments performed over a period of 2 months. Klippel-Feil syndrome is an anatomical entity that results in premature cervical degenerative changes, which may cause radiculopathy. Flexion-distraction manipulation performed to the cervical spine is a relatively new clinical procedure, which shows great promise for the treatment of cervical radiculopathy.

A 60 year old male presented with complaints of pain and limited motion in his neck, with pain and weakness in his left shoulder and arm. These symptoms began after a fall approximately 4 months prior. His previous allopathic care included medication and physical/occupational therapy, which provided no significant relief. Cervical plain film radiographs demonstrated degenerative changes and the magnetic resonance imaging revealed multilevel central stenosis. The patient was treated with flexion-distraction manipulation, which provided significant relief of his subjective and objective findings. Cervical stenosis with resultant radicular and neurological complaints may be difficult to manage with both conventional allopathic and chiropractic treatment. Flexion distraction manipulative therapy may be an effective treatment option for these often-difficult cases.

Background: Although flexion distraction performed to the lumbar spine is commonly utilized and documented as effective, flexion distraction manipulation performed to the cervical spine has not been adequately studied.

Subjective: To objectively quantify data from the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) to support the clinical judgment exercised for the use of flexion distraction manipulation to treat cervical radiculopathy.

Design and setting: A retrospective analysis of the files of 39 patients from a private chiropractic clinic that met diagnostic criteria for inclusion. All patients were diagnosed with cervical radiculopathy and treated by a single practitioner with flexion distraction manipulation and some form of adjunctive physical medicine modality.

Main outcome measures: The VAS was used to objectively quantify pain. Of the 39 files reviewed, 22 contained an initial and posttreatment VAS score and were therefore utilized in this study.

Results: This study revealed a statistically significant reduction in pain as quantified by visual analogue scores. The mean number of treatments required was $13.2 \pm 8.2$, with a range of 6 to 37. Only 3 persons required more treatments than the mean plus 1 standard deviation.

Conclusion: The results of this study show promise for chiropractic and manual therapy techniques such as flexion distraction, as well as demonstrating that other, larger research studies must be performed for cervical radiculopathy.


Objective: To discuss the nonsurgical treatment of a cervical disk herniation with flexion distraction manipulation. Clinical Features: A case study of cervical disk syndrome with radicular symptoms is presented. Magnetic resonance imaging revealed a large C5-C6 disk herniation. Degenerative changes at the affected level were demonstrated on cervical spine plain film radiographs.

Intervention and Outcome: The patient received treatment in the form of flexion distraction manipulation and adjunctive therapies. A complete resolution of the patient’s subjective complaints was achieved.

Conclusion: Flexion distraction has been a technique associated with musculoskeletal conditions of the lumbar spine. Flexion distraction applied to the cervical spine might be an effective therapy in the treatment of cervical disk herniations. Although further controlled studies are needed, treatment of cervical disk syndromes with flexion distraction might be a viable form of conservative care.


A case report is discussed in which a clinically diagnosed case of an L4-L5 nuclear disk prolapse with a sequestrated fragment was certified by computerized axial
tomography and magnetic resonance imaging at the initiation of the treatment period. It was treated with flexion-distraction manipulation, hot and cold fomentation, positive galvanism, a lumbosacral support, nutritional supplementation, and abstinence from sitting and exercises. Four weeks after initiation of treatment, the patient was asymptomatic. Eight weeks after initiation of treatment, and 6 weeks after the original scan, magnetic resonance imaging certified a reduction in the size of the prolapse within the vertebral canal. An 11 month follow-up examination indicated the patient had no exacerbations of her condition and all objective findings were negative.

   Nineteen chronic pelvic patients helped with flexion distraction adjusting

   Pelvic Pain and Organic Dysfunction Syndrome Helped with Flexion Distraction

   Stable Spondylolisthesis 75% Relieved of Pain with Cox® Distraction

   13 of 18 Low Back Patients Felt Greater Positive Effect of Flexion Distraction over Placebo

   To discuss the case of a patient with severe, multilevel central canal stenosis who was managed conservatively with flexion-distraction manipulation; to introduce a cautious approach to the application of treatment, which can reduce the risk of adverse effects and might make an apprehensive doctor more comfortable treating this condition; and to propose a theoretic mechanism for relief of symptoms through use of chiropractic manipulation. Clinical Features: A 78-year-old man had low back pain and severe bilateral leg pains. Objective findings were minimal, yet magnetic resonance imaging demonstrated severe degenerative lumbar stenosis at L3-L4 and L4-L5 and to a lesser degree at L2-L3. Intervention and Outcome: Flexion-distraction manipulation of the lumbar spine was performed. Incremental increases in traction forces were applied as the patient responded positively to
care. He experienced a decrease in the frequency and intensity of his leg symptoms and a resolution of his low back pain. These improvements were maintained at a 5-month follow-up visit. Conclusion: Successful management of symptoms either caused by or complicated by lumbar spinal stenosis is presented. Manipulation of the spine shows promise for relief of symptoms through improving spinal biomechanics. Further study in the form of a randomized clinical trial is warranted.

Chiropractors need a nonsurgical, conservative approach to treat low back pain with sciatica as an alternative to and before beginning the more aggressive, and potentially hazardous, surgical treatment. There is some support for the idea that lumbar disc herniation with neurological deficit and radicular pain does not contraindicate the judicious used of manipulation. Although significant questions remain for the evaluation and treatment of lumbar radiculopathy (sciatica) with disc herniations) there is ample evidence to suggest that a course of conservative care, including spinal manipulation, should be completed before surgical consult is considered.

Ice was applied to a patient's lower back for 5 minutes, followed by flexion-distraction mobilization done by placing a hand contact over the L4 spinous process and using the pelvic section of the table to distract the lumbar spine between the L4-L5 segment. This procedure was repeated three times with each distractive process held for 20 seconds. The patient was told to lie on her back at home with her knees bent in a "90/90" position whenever possible. She was instructed to get up only for bathroom use.

One week after this appointment, she reported that her lower back pain was almost gone and that the leg pain no longer bothered her. Treatment again consisted of lumbar flexion distraction and long axis distraction of the lower extremity. At this point, side posture rotary manipulation was added to her treatment plan.

The chiropractic management of a patient with a large herniation of the L5-S1 intervertebral disc is described. Manipulative therapy administered twice a day, over a 16-day period, consisted of flexion distraction mobilization, rotational manipulations, and extension mobilizations. Stretching, strengthening, and coordination exercises were performed in conjunctions with the manipulative therapy. Dramatic subjective and objective improvement followed chiropractic management. The criteria used to determine the type and direction of manipulative therapy, and the rationale for applying three different forms of
Manipulative therapy are discussed.

Thirty-two patients with subacute or chronic low back pain were randomly assigned to group A (flexion-distraction technique and trigger point therapy), group B (sham adjustment and effleurage massage), group C (flexion-distraction and effleurage), or group D (sham adjustment and trigger point therapy) for 6 weeks of treatment. The Roland Morris Questionnaire (RMQ) and the Pain Disability Index (PDI) were the outcome instruments of primary interest. RMQ median score changes were similar across groups. PDI median score changes at week 3 were greatest in group A, less in groups C and D, and least in group B. At week 6, group B still showed less change than the others.

A 36-year-old mother of 2, previously healthy and athletic, presented with low back pain, sharp shooting pain down the side of her left leg, and a numb feeling in her toes. She stated that she was unable to toe raise or straighten her left leg at the knee.
The CT scan indicated a central left disk herniation at the L5 to S1 level, which was abutting the ventral portion of the thecal sac and the left S1 nerve sheath. Treatment involved 9 therapy sessions over a 3 week period. Each session consisted of 4 modalities. Interferential electrotherapy with moist heat lasting 15 minutes was used to control pain. The interferential was set at a low frequency, 1 to 15 Hz, with approximately 20 mA intensity (for patient tolerance) to produce endorphin release and relieve hypertonicity.
Manipulation of the lumbar spine and sacroiliac joints was done with the patient in side posture. This manipulative technic was well tolerated and not painful during or after the procedure. Finally, flexion traction of the specific vertebral segments was accomplished using a Lloyd flexion distraction table, in which a manual traction force was applied to the L5 spinous process in a cephalad direction while the table was flexed, producing additional traction force at the specific vertebral segment. The patient improved with each session. After the 9th session, the patient felt she had improved enough to discontinue treatment.


80% of cervical and lumbar spine disc herniations helped by flexion distraction adjustment. 63% showed MRI reduction in size


Objective: To describe the nonsurgical treatment of acute S1 radiculopathy from a large (12 × 12 × 13 mm) L5-S1 disk herniation. Clinical Features: A 31-year-old man presented with severe lower back pain and pain, paresthesia, and plantar flexion weakness of the left leg. His symptoms began 5 days before the initial visit and progressed despite nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and analgesic medication. An absent left Achilles reflex, left S1 dermatome hypesthesia, and left gastrocnemius/soleus weakness was noted. Magnetic resonance imaging demonstrated a large L5-S1 disk herniation. Intervention and Outcome: Initial treatment of this patient included McKenzie protocol press-ups to reduce and centralize symptoms, nonloading exercises for cardiovascular fitness, and lower leg isotonic exercises to prevent atrophy. Counseling was provided to reduce abnormal illness behavior risk. Later, flexion distraction and side-posture manipulation were provided to improve joint function. Sensory motor training, trunk stabilization exercises, and trigger point therapy were also used. He returned to modified work 27 days after symptom onset. A follow-up, comparative magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) study was unchanged. He was discharged as asymptomatic (zero rating on both the Oswestry and numerical pain scales) after 50 days and 20 visits, although the left S1 reflex remained absent. Reassessment 169 days later revealed neither significant symptoms nor lifestyle restrictions. Conclusion: This case demonstrates the potential benefit of a chiropractic rehabilitation strategy by use of multimodal therapy for lumbar radiculopathy associated with disk herniation.


Introduction: Flexion distraction has gained increased credibility as a therapeutic modality for treatment of low back pain. Although important work in the area has elucidated the intradiscal pressure profiles during flexion distraction, the accompanying neural responses have yet to be described. The purpose of this pilot study was to access neural reflex responses to motion with three degrees of
freedom applied to the lumbar spine and to evaluate H-reflex responses of the soleus.

Methods. Subjects (n=4) were measured for Hmax reflexes determined from stimulus responses recruitment curves measured in neutral prone position, flexion, left and right lateral flexion, and axial rotation on a Cox adjusting table. The mean of 10 evoked Hmax waves expressed as a percentage of maximal M-wave was the criterion measure. Spinal range of motion was quantified by Metrecrom digitization.

Results. The data showed considerable variation in some movement ranges notwithstanding identical table positioning for all subjects (i.e. flexion 3-12°). Mean Hmax/Mmax ratios were 65.5±15, 65.5±17, 62.8±12, 59.6±17 and 65.9±19 for neutral, flexion, R. Lateral, L. Lateral flexion and R and L axial rotation respectively. The salient findings in the data were the non-existent H-reflex changes in lateral flexion and the significant suppression of neuromuscular activation in flexion (65+16 vs 60+15%; p<0.05) and ipsilateral rotation (65+16 vs 59+17%; p<0.05). Slight perturbations in numerous afferent receptors are known to significantly alter the H-reflex. The absence of measurable changes in lateral flexion may indicate that both slow and fast adapting receptors could be involved in lumbar motion. These preliminary findings suggest the need for further dynamic motion studies of the flexion distraction neurophysiology


Background: Flexion distraction has gained increased credibility as a therapeutic modality for treatment of low back pain. Although important work in the area has elucidated the intradiskal pressure profiles during flexion distraction, the accompanying neural responses have yet to be described. Objective: The purpose of this pilot study was to assess neural reflex responses to motion with 3 degrees of freedom applied to the lumbar spine and to evaluate H-reflex responses of the soleus. Methods: Subjects (n = 12) were measured for H-maximum reflexes determined from stimulus response recruitment curves measured in neutral prone position. The mean of 10 evoked H-waves (at H-maximum stimulus intensity) were measured in neutral position, flexion, left and right lateral flexion, and axial rotation of the trunk on an adjusting table. H-reflexes were expressed as a percentage of maximal M-wave for the criterion measure. Spinal range of motion was quantified by digitization. Results: The data showed variation in some movement ranges, notwithstanding identical table positioning for all subjects. Mean H-reflex amplitude was decreased (15.2 ± 5.8 mV to 13.8 ± 5.8 mV), and the H/M ratio was also decreased in flexion compared with neutral (55.0% ± 19.1% to 50.3% ± 19.4%; P < .05). Conclusions: Trunk flexion is accompanied by inhibition of the motor neuron pool. Slight perturbations in numerous afferent receptors are known to significantly alter the H-reflex. The absence of measurable changes in lateral flexion and trunk rotation may indicate that both slow- and fast-adapting
receptors could be involved in lumbar motion. These preliminary findings suggest the need for further dynamic motion studies of the flexion distraction neurophysiologic condition.


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Lumbar radicular symptoms can be caused by lumbar intervertebral disc herniations. If a disc injury is positively established through diagnostic imaging, surgery is a commonly recommended approach. Flexion/distraction manipulation is a therapeutic alternative that may offer relief for subjective complaints and elimination of objective signs. Success with this technique might spare the patient an operative procedure. This is a case report of one such incidence. Flexion/distraction manipulation is a treatment developed by James M. Cox. It is often used for lumbar disc injuries (herniation, bulges, etc.), and for other low back and lower extremity radicular conditions. The technique involves the use of a specialized table which allows for passive distraction, flexion, lateral bending, and rotation. These different planes of motion, along with the use of appropriate adjunctive therapy and exercises, allow for reduction of symptoms attributable to lumbar disc syndromes. Contraindications and indications for flexion/distraction manipulation have been identified and enumerated. Flexion/distraction manipulation is a treatment that should be investigated as a part of the algorithm for presurgical therapies of lumbar intervertebral disc injuries. This alternative in conservative care may be of benefit to a large number of patients. The surgical option for treating intervertebral disc herniations might be reduced with propagation of flexion/distraction manipulation.

It is necessary to determine which specific types of manipulation and non-manipulative types of chiropractic adjustive care are most effective for particular types of low back pain across both tissue-specific and functional classifications. To characterize the quantity and quality of literature gathered for an Expert Panel that was convened to rate various specific chiropractic adjustive procedures for the treatment of common types of low back pain, drawing on the clinical expertise of the panel members and the relevant literature.

A systematic review was conducted of treatment-specific, condition-specific trials, studies, and case reports of chiropractic care for low back pain. The 3 most studied adjustive procedures are side-posture high-velocity, low-amplitude; distraction (mostly flexion distraction); and mobilization, respectively. The clinical condition most commonly addressed by the included studies is low back pain.


Objective: To assess the intraexaminer and interexaminer reliability of clinicians trained in flexion-distraction technique to determine the need for chiropractic adjustment of each segment of the lumbar spine. Design: This was an intraexaminer and interexaminer reliability study of commonly used chiropractic assessment procedures, including static and motion palpation and visual observation. Setting: Chiropractic college; by four licensed chiropractors trained in flexion-distraction technique, two with more than 20 years' experience and two with 3 or fewer years' experience. Subjects: Subjects were 18 volunteers; 16 were symptom free, and 2 had low back pain at the time the study was conducted. Main Outcome Measure: The kappa statistic was computed for all comparisons and interpreted in categories ranging from “poor” (<0.00) to “almost perfect” (>0.80). Results: Intraexaminer reliability was greater than interexaminer reliability. For intraexaminer reliability there was considerable variation by segment and among the four examiners, but intraexaminer reliability appeared generally higher than interexaminer reliability. Overall, more subluxations were identified on the second examination than on the first. For interexaminer reliability, kappa scores were generally in the “poor” to “slight” categories. Discussion: The results of this study, similar to those of other studies, indicate that even chiropractors trained in the same technique seem to show little consensus on the indications for the necessity to adjust specific segments of the spine. A more standardized assessment approach might be helpful in improving the reliability of diagnostic assessments.

Objective: To describe the safety and potential therapeutic benefit of spinal manipulation postepidural injection in the nonsurgical treatment of patients with cervical and lumbar radiculopathy.

Methods: The study design was a retrospective review of outcomes of 20 cervical and 60 lumbar radiculopathy patients who underwent spinal manipulation postepidural injection in a hospital setting. Patients received either fluoroscopically guided or computed tomography (CT)–guided epidural injection of a combination of lidocaine and Depo-Medrol. The manual therapy consisted of an immediate postepidural application of flexion distraction mobilization and then high-velocity, low-amplitude spinal manipulation to the affected spinal regions. Outcome criteria were empirically defined as significant improvement, temporary improvement, or no change. The minimum follow-up time for all patients was 1 year.

Results: There were no complications associated with spinal manipulation, whereas 3 complications associated with the epidural injection procedure were noted. Of lumbar spine patients, 36.67% (n = 22) noted significant improvement, 41.67% (n = 25) experienced temporary improvement, and 21.67% (n = 13) reported no change. Of the patients undergoing spinal manipulation after cervical epidural injection, 50% (n = 10) noted significant improvement, 30% (n = 6) experienced temporary improvement, whereas 20% (n = 4) exhibited no change.

Conclusions: These data suggest that spinal manipulation postepidural injection is a safe nonsurgical procedure to use in the treatment of the patient with radiculopathy of spinal origin. This is also the first report of the use of spinal manipulation postepidural injection in the cervical spine.


Objective: To identify aspects of the delivery of placebo chiropractic treatments by using sham adjustments that may cause a treatment effect and that may affect the success of blinding. Design and Setting: Two-period crossover design in a chiropractic college research clinic. Subjects: Eighteen volunteer staff, students, and faculty of the chiropractic college who reported low-back pain within the last 6 months. Interventions: Flexion-distraction technique was used to perform chiropractic adjustments, and a hand-held instrument (Activator adjusting instrument) with the pressure gauge set on the 0 was used to perform sham adjustments. The treatment period was 2 weeks, with a total of 4 visits. Main Outcome Measures: The Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for pain and Global Well-Being Scale (GWBS). Results: Although VAS and GWBS scores improved with both treatments, a somewhat greater improvement occurred in most cases with the active treatment. Eight of 14 patients interviewed believed that the placebo had a
treatment effect. Conclusion: This study provided preliminary information that was useful in planning the protocol for a placebo chiropractic treatment in the randomized clinical trial for which it was designed.


Objective The purpose of this report is to describe chiropractic treatment of lower back and unilateral leg pain in a pregnant patient. Clinical Features A 26-year-old woman in her second trimester of pregnancy had severe pain in her lower back that radiated to her hips bilaterally and to her right leg. She reported tingling down her right lower leg to the dorsum of her foot. Although no diagnostic imaging was performed, her differential diagnoses included lumbalgia with associated radiculopathy. Intervention and Outcome Treatment consisted of manual traction in the side-lying position using a specialized chiropractic table and treatment technique (Cox flexion-distraction decompression) modified for pregnancy. Relief was noted after the first treatment, and complete resolution of her subjective and objective findings occurred after 8 visits. Conclusion: When modified, this chiropractic technique appears to be an effective method for treating lower back pain with radiation to the leg in a pregnant patient who cannot lie prone.


Objective The purpose of this report was to describe the use of Cox flexion distraction decompression manipulation on a patient with radiculopathy from a C6/C7 disc herniation. Clinical Features A 33-year-old man complained of severe neck pain and spasms, pain radiating down his left arm and upper back, and associated numbness in his fingers. Cervical spine plain film radiographs showed mild C6/C7 osseous degenerative changes. Cervical magnetic resonance imaging revealed a moderate-sized left posterolateral disc herniation at C6/C7 causing severe foraminal stenosis. Intervention and Outcome Treatment consisted of Cox flexion distraction decompression manipulation and adjunctive physiotherapy modalities. The patient was treated a total of 15 times over a period of 10 weeks. Subjective findings using a pain scale and objective examination findings supported a good clinical outcome. At 2-year follow-up, subjective and objective findings remained stable. Conclusion This study reports Cox flexion distraction decompression manipulation and physiotherapy modalities showed good subjective and objective clinical outcomes for this patient.


OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study is to review the literature concerning distraction manipulation of the lumbar spine, particularly regarding physiological effects, clinical efficacy, and safety. DATA SOURCES: A search of the English language literature was conducted using the MEDLINE, Embase, CINAHL, Chiropractic Research Archives Collection, and Manual, Alternative, and Natural Therapies Information System databases. A secondary hand search of bibliographies was completed to identify older or non-indexed literature. DATA SELECTION AND EXTRACTION: Articles were identified, which described the characteristics of distraction manipulation beyond a simple description or the results of treatment with distraction manipulation. Data were extracted on the basis of relevance to the stated objective. DATA SYNTHESIS AND RESULTS: Thirty articles were identified. Three were uncontrolled or pilot studies, 3 were basic science studies, and 6 were case series. Most were case reports. Lumbar distraction manipulation is a nonthrust mechanically assisted manual medicine technique with characteristics of manipulation, mobilization, and traction. It is used for a variety of lumbar conditions and chronic pelvic pain. The primary rationale for its use is on the basis of the biomechanical effects of axial spinal distraction. Little data are available describing the in vivo effect of distraction when used in combination with flexion or other motions. CONCLUSIONS: Despite widespread use, the efficacy of distraction manipulation is not well established. Further research is needed to establish the efficacy and safety of distraction manipulation and to explore biomechanical, neurological, and biochemical events that may be altered by this treatment.


Gay et al1 discussed nucleus pulposus movement during flexion and extension of the lumbar spine, citing Fennell et al2 as stating that the nucleus moves anterior on extension and posterior on flexion. Full study of the Fennell paper, however, shows a different finding. Fennell studied nuclear motion on magnetic resonance imaging of 3 patients—1 normal 18-year-old patient with no history of low back pain and two 25- and 46-year-old patients with low back pain history.
The 18-year-old patient with no back pain did show anterior nuclear movement on extension and posterior motion on flexion; however, the 2 patients with a history of low back pain showed the L4-L5 disk to move anteriorly during flexion. The nucleus spread within the L4-L5 disk during flexion instead of migrating posteriorly. Fennel explained the 2 unexpected results in the painful spines as possible disk degeneration etiology.

Gay et al\textsuperscript{1} also discussed the study of Beattie et al\textsuperscript{3} about 20 healthy young women with lumbar spine magnetic resonance imaging in extension, and Gay et al stated that they found that the posterior margin of the nucleus in the normal lower lumbar disk tends to move anteriorly with extension and posteriorly with flexion, and there was no anterior nucleus movement. Again, that is not a complete explanation of Beattie’s finding. He found that in normal disks without degeneration, the posterior disk margin increased between the posterior margin of the nucleus pulposus and the posterior portion of the vertebral bodies of the normal disks of healthy young females during extension motion. However, 8 of the 20 subjects had at least one degenerative disk in the lower lumbar spine. The nucleus of the degenerative disks did not move the same as normal disks. Degenerative disks deform differently from nondegenerative disks. Other similar studies have shown that the nucleus pulposus moves posterior or does not move with extension movement.\textsuperscript{4, 5, 6, 7} Reading the article of Gay et al., one is led to believe that the nucleus pulposus always moves anterior on extension and posterior on flexion, when in fact that is not the case. Gay et al accurately cite literature showing that stenosis is induced into the vertebral and the osseoligamentous canals by extension, which causes posterior annulus protrusion, ligamentum flavum buckling, facet imbrication, and narrowing of the posterior disk space.

Hopefully, I have augmented the findings as given in the important paper of Gay et al. The movement of the nucleus pulposus is unpredictable in the degenerated disk. As chiropractors, we treat degenerated disks and need to be aware of their behavior. The intervertebral disk is probably the most common source of chronic low back pain.\textsuperscript{8} Tolerance testing before applying manipulation to the patient’s spine is prudent because of the unpredictable nature of the disk. For safety, I teach that the maximum angle of flexion used is 6° when long y-axis decompression is applied to the motion segment. At that degree, our research has shown that the ligament stresses are well within normal limits so that damage will not occur to the stability of the segments. This small 6° flexion angle used may diminish the value of this discussion, but nevertheless, we must maintain correct biomechanical concepts for future study.

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• Post-surgical continued pain patients, aka FBSS or Failed Back Surgical Syndrome, seek relief, any relief. Chiropractic offers it. In this retrospective study of 32 patients treated with chiropractic Cox Technic flexion distraction, the patients reported improvement:
  • 4.1 out of 10 points overall
  • 5.7 out of 10 points in patients who underwent combined surgeries (lumbar discectomy, fusion and/or laminectomy)
  • Best of all, no adverse side effects from the chiropractic Cox Technic treatment were reported!

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  • New study of Cox® Distraction Manipulation in the treatment of lumbar spine stenosis lumbar spinal stenosis patients improved by 76% and disability improved in 73%

  13 visits to attain 0 out of 10 pain score and 2% Oswestry. At 2 year follow-up, still resolved.

  Relief of neck pain and arm pain in 10 visits in 4 weeks which continues at 8 months.

  • Testicular Pain (and Low Back Pain and Leg Pain) Relieved with Cox Technic
  • 36 year old man with 5 years of lower back pain, right leg pain, testicular pain
  • 19 treatments with Cox Technic (flexion distraction) in 8 weeks
  • Testicular pain – improved at 1 visit; gone in 3 weeks; still gone at 6 month follow up
  • Low back pain – decreased at 4 weeks
  • Leg pain – gone at 4 weeks

- 75 year old man with low back pain and right anterior thigh and left posterior leg pain of 3 years’ duration is relieved with Cox Technic (flexion distraction).
- 4 visits – no right or left leg pain
- 3 months of 16 visits – low back and buttock pain are minimal with no leg pain
- 80% relief

Cyriax, Quilette, and Kramer hypothesized that as the vertebrae in the spine are distracted, a negative pressure develops in the disc, and sucks back a protrusion. The present study shows that the decrease in the intradiscal pressures may provide the opportunity for the reduction in the disc bulge during the flexion-distraction procedure. Ramos et al. reported decreases in the intradiscal pressures during Vertebral Axial Decompression (VAD) procedure on three patients measured intraoperatively. The result of the present study are in general agreement with the study reported by Ramos and Martin. Andersson et al. reported increases in the intradiscal pressures at L3-L4 disc on four volunteers during active and passive traction. A possible reason for the increase in the intradiscal pressures could be that the muscles of the in vivo subjects could have been contracting while under active and passive traction. Work is in progress to monitor the muscle activity during in vivo situations of treating the patients using the flexion-distraction procedure.


We observed a significant decrease in intradiscal pressure during the flexion-distraction procedure for low back pain. The pressure has increased during extension motion of the table. The pressures have increased during right lateral motion whereas the pressures have decreased during the left lateral motion. During circumduction the pressures have decreased during the left lateral and flexion motions, where as they have increased during right lateral and flexion combined motions. In all of the motions the pressures returned to their original values when the spine was brought back to the initial prone position. One of the reasons for the increase and decrease during lateral motions is due to the fact that the transducer was inserted some what right laterally from the center of the disc. The results clearly show that the pressures are affected during different motions of the spine associated with the motions of the table. Even though the present study is limited to one cadaver, the results are very interesting and studies with more number of cadavers and studies on animals can give further insight into the changes in the pressures at different regions of the spine.

We observed a significant decrease in intradiscal pressure during the flexion-distraction procedure for low back pain. When the discs were not pressurized, the pressures went below 0 mm Hg. When the discs were pressurized, the decrease in the intradiscal pressures was much larger, suggesting that in patients with higher intradiscal pressures, the decrease may be much higher during the treatment. The pressures returned to their original values when the spine was brought back to the initial prone position. Quilette(2), and Kramer (3) hypothesized that as the vertebrae in the spine are distracted, a negative pressure develops in the disc, and sucks back a protrusion. Ramos et al. (4) reported on the intradiscal pressure during Vertebral Axial Decompression (VAD) procedure on three patients measured intraoperatively. The results showed that the disc pressures reduced during the VAD therapy. They demonstrated that the disc pressures can go as low as -160 mmHg. The results of the present study are in general agreement with the study reported by Ramos and Martin (4). Anderson at al. (5) reported the intradiscal pressures at L3-L4 disc on four volunteers during standing, lying, active traction, and passive traction. The findings showed an increase in the disc pressure during both active and passive traction. The results from the present study do not agree with the results reported by Anderson et al. (5). A possible reason could be that the muscles of the in vivo subjects could have been contracting while under active and passive traction. Work is in progress to monitor the muscle activity during in vivo situations of treating the patients using flexion-distraction procedure.

   The doctors who have experience have applied significantly higher preloads and peak loads compared to doctors having less than one year of experience. This observation was valid for the forces in the posterior-to-anterior direction as well as inferior to superior direction. Doctors who have more experience have a lesser duration cycle compared to the inexperienced doctors. This system can be used to quantify the skills of experienced chiropractors and this information can be used to train the future doctors of chiropractic. This device can be used to quantify the forces in treating different patient populations presenting different conditions and a research data base can be developed using that information. Future work will be aimed in this direction. This study is a first to report the force characteristics of experienced and inexperienced doctors using a flexion-distraction procedure.

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   Cox* Distraction procedures for the cervical spine and thoracic spine are a natural outgrowth of its application to the low back. This technical overview of Cox* Distraction procedures for the cervical and thoracic spine is intended to introduce
this form of care for patients intolerant of classic rotatory thrust techniques due to such anatomical and pathological findings as degenerative disc disease, vertebral artery syndrome, disc herniation, blocked vertebra, occipitalization, scoliosis, other congenital defects, as well as for patients who just cannot be high velocity adjusted.

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   After four weeks of Cox® Distraction therapy, she reported no leg or back pain. She is able to walk and function again much to the delight of her family and the confusion of her friends.

   The authors present a case of a 24-year-old Hispanic hyperkyphotic male with a complaint of acute low back pain as the result of a bending and pulling injury. The patient presented with a marked right laterally flexed antalgic lean and appeared to be in severe pain. Radiographs revealed an L6 vertebra with hypoplastic lumbosacral articular facets and spina bifida occulta. The patient also had radicular compression symptomatology on physical exam. He was treated with flexion distraction for three treatments with a significant decrease in symptomatology. The significance of this case is that flexion distraction may also be useful in the treatment of conditions with inherent instability such as in the case presented.

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9. Case Report #9 - Slipped femoral capital epiphysis leads to degeneration
10. Case Report #10 - Renal cyst causes back pain
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20. Case Report #20 - Spinal cord edema at cervical disc level
21. Case Report #21 - Bilateral Arm and Leg Pain
22. Case Report #22 - Surgery for large extraforaminal disc
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24. Case Report #24 - Rapid onset stenotic changes
25. Case Report #25 - Cervical Spine Stenosis
26. Case Report #26 - Klippel Feil
27. Case Report #27 - Patient Avoids Third Surgery - Cervical Spine
28. Case Report #28 - Ankylosing Spondylitis (Dr. Mike Poulin)
29. Case Report #29 - Multidisciplinary approach to lumbar disc herniation (Drs. Gangemi, Ditsworth, Lombardi)
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31. Case Report #31 - L5 Spondylolisthesis with Low Back and Leg Pain
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33. Case Report #33 - Special Protocol for L4-5 disc extrusion (Dr. Stuart Rosenthal)
34. Case Report #34 - MRI correlation with clinical findings in stenosis and disc herniation
35. Case Report #35 - MRI misses fragment, Clinical exam finds it
36. Case Report #36 - Marked motor weakness requires surgery
37. Case Report #37 - Two Disc Herniations - one touches spinal cord
38. Case Report #38 - Degenerative Osteochondrosis with Scoliosis
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43. Case Report #42 - Marked Disc Degeneration and Stenosis
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45. Case Report #46 - Far Lateral Disc Herniation: Surgery & Cox Technic
46. Case Report #47 - Butterfly Vertebra Treated Post Surgical Disc Removal

47. Case Report #48 - L5S1 Disc Fragment

48. Case Report #49 - Pre/Post MRI Study of a 10mm Lumbar Disc Extrusion (Drs. Gangemi & LeMarr)

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50. Case Report #51 - Sciatica with Muscle Weakness (Dr. Donna Lieberman)

51. Case Report #52 - Realistic Expectations for Spine Fusion and Hip Replacement

52. Case Report #53 - Leg Pain Returns after Surgery, Relieved with FD

53. Case Report #54 - Progressive Disc Degeneration in the Cervical Spine From C6-7 to C4-5

54. Case Report #55 - Large Extraforaminal L2-L3 Disc Herniation

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57. Case Report #58 - Patient Avoids Surgery for L3-4 Disc Herniation

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59. Case Report #60 - Upper Level Disc Herniation Thigh Pain

60. Case Report #61 - Motor Weakness and Atrophy (Dr. Dean Greenwood)

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62. Case Report #64 - Cervical DDD with Scleratogenous Pain Distribution

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75. Case Report #82 - Surgery for Spinal Stenosis

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87. Case Report #94 - Cox Technic Flexion-Distraction and Decompression Relieves Right Lower Extremity Radiculopathy and Low Back Pain Post Laminectomy (Dr. Eric Frank)

88. Case Report #95 - Spinal Stenosis in an 82-Year-Old Male (Dr. Robert Hayden)

89. Case Report #96 - Lumbar Intervertebral Disc Syndrome L4/5 Left with Compression of L5 Nerve – Relieved (Dr. Bryce Milam)

90. Case Report #97 - C5-6 and C6-7 Disc Herniation with Stenosis Causing Nerve Root Impingement (Dr. James Brandt)

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95. Case Report #102 - 37 year old Female with Spondylolisthesis & Disc Herniation (Dr. James Brandt)

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99. Case Report #106 - L4-5 Disc Herniation with Motor Weakness - Relief with Cox Technic (Dr. James Cox)

100. Case Report #107 - Thoraco-Lumbar Spinal Stenosis - Avoids 5th Back Surgery (Dr. Kurt Olding)

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