

# Treating Chronic Mechanical Spinal Pain

Spinal manipulation may provide broader and more significant long-term benefit for chronic spinal pain patients than acupuncture and medication.

Muller R, Giles LGE. Long-Term Follow-Up of a Randomized Clinical Trial Assessing the Efficacy of Medication, Acupuncture, and Spinal Manipulation for Chronic Mechanical Spinal Pain Syndromes. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2005;28(1):3-11.

## BACKGROUND

Chronic mechanical back pain and neck pain, which are often caused by an injury or disease, present a diagnostic and treatment challenge and pose a significant financial strain on the health care system. Some evidence shows that a multidisciplinary team approach to treating spinal pain results in high patient satisfaction. The evidence about the superiority of a particular treatment for non-specific chronic spinal pain is inconclusive.

**THE OBJECTIVE** of this study was to assess the long-term effect of medication, needle acupuncture and spinal manipulation on treating patients with chronic (> 13 weeks) spinal pain.

**THIS STUDY** conducted a one-year follow-up of a randomized clinical trial investigating the effectiveness of medication (Celebrex, Vioxx and/or acetaminophen), acupuncture or high-velocity low-amplitude spinal manipulation on treating chronic spinal pain. Sixty-nine patients were randomized into three treatment groups, receiving one type of treatment for nine weeks. The one-year follow-up was conducted through Oswestry Back Pain Index, Neck Disability Index, Short-Form-36 and Visual Analog Scales. The study analyzed the results of treatment of 40 patients who had received only one randomly allocated type of treatment.

## RESULTS

Comparison of the initial and long-term follow-up questionnaires produced the following results:

- Only the group receiving spinal manipulation showed long-term treatment benefit, with five of the original seven improvements remaining statistically significant after one year.
- Only one of seven improvements remained statistically significant in each of the acupuncture and the medication treatment groups at follow-up.

## CONCLUSION

For treating chronic spinal pain, spinal manipulation, if not contraindicated, may provide broader and more significant long-term benefits than acupuncture or pain-relief medication.

## CAVEATS

Larger studies evaluating long-term efficacy of treatments for chronic spinal pain are needed.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT** chiropractic at [www.acatoday.org](http://www.acatoday.org). For more information on chiropractic research, visit [www.ccgpp.org](http://www.ccgpp.org).



The research described in this column comes from credible, peer-reviewed journals. It is intended to serve as a resource for practitioners and patients to assist them in consideration of various health care options and does not replace clinical judgment.