

CHIROPRACTIC INVOLVEMENT IN GLOBAL HEALTH

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The burden of spinal diseases contributes to overall global disability, economic hardship, morbidity and even opioid misuse. There are many surgical contributions to the global initiative of improving spine health. However, there are not so many participating chiropractic doctors who are involved in this agenda.

Not only can chiropractic care drastically improve outcomes for certain spine and neuromuscular diseases, but it can also save thousands of dollars to participating organizations worldwide.

The global healthcare initiative around the world aims for one particular goal, and that goal is to keep nations of low and middle-income countries (LMICs) healthy. Within the sphere of chiropody, there are three main areas of global focus: the healthy ageing, opioid misuse and women and children's health [1].

Besides these areas of focus, chiropractors may have a role to play in surgical conditions and post-surgery rehabilitation. Unfortunately, most of the time chiropractic doctors are never involved nor considered in these round-table discussions; and perhaps it is time for the chiropractic community to establish their own voice as healers in the global health.

In this paper we are aiming to showcase how chiropractic doctors can bridge the gap on global healthcare spend, and outcomes that could lead to better patients' health and improved lifestyle.

Financial considerations for surgical vs. non-surgical treatments

Historically, many spine-related medical missionary trips to LMICs were done with surgery in-mind. However, non-surgical way of treatment patients with spine diseases has never been actively brought up by chiropractors. In this unique situation, chiropractic community actually have a winning agenda that can tremendously improve not only health of LMICs patients, but also provide a cost effective and collaborative environment worldwide.

Certainly, surgical interventions do bring great results, however, those results come with costly preparation and added semantics.

With any advanced surgeries in LMICs - there are several main concerns with local and visiting physicians:

1. Is there any available equipment for required spine surgery and how much does it cost to bring it to the visiting country?
2. How much money needs to be allocated in order to address postoperative care and complications?
3. Can local physicians provide an efficient continue of care postoperatively in local settings when visiting doctors depart?

Out of three mentioned above points, two of them has to do with allocated finances and one with local surgeons' competencies. In addition to that, another ethical consideration should be brought up, which is concerned with local physicians' preparations, cultural biases [2] and sometimes - even intimidations. It's not a surprise why some local physicians might be intimidated by visiting surgeons.

However, some local surgeons may not be able to catch up to the performed procedures or simply don't know what to do in certain scenarios. This brings us up to another point, where advanced education maybe far superior for the visiting country's healthcare capability.

Chiropractic treatment as an affordable option. While surgical interventions do provide great outcomes, chiropractic doctors could easily address certain spine and neuromuscular diseases.

Below we provided several options why chiropractic adjustments are cheaper and more efficient way of treating patients at large:

1. Chiropractic care does not require costly equipment for a successful treatment of patients with certain spine and neuromuscular diseases.
2. The spine operating rooms need a specialized team and bulky equipment (e.g C-arm, CT, MRI, navigation system etc.) [4], which is not always available for transportation between countries or affordable to have.
3. Due to minimal requirements for spinal adjustments by chiropractors – it's becoming a viable option for treating population at large. While surgical intervention can provide care for a single patient at a time, chiropractors can provide a bulk of that work non-operatively with less time per patient for certain diseases.
4. Exchange of adjusting/treating techniques does not require a costly education vs. operating technique.
5. Due to non-invasiveness of chiropractic procedures, chiropractors can monitor progress of local doctors through telemedicine or simple phone call.

Permanent mark and long lasting relationship

As we mentioned earlier healthy ageing, opioid misuse, women and children's health is taking a priority in global health. While primary care physicians traditionally cover these concerns, most of the mentioned above topics could be easily integrated in chiropractic care worldwide; as chiropractors are trained to treat pediatric as well as adult patients effectively.

The research findings from Rand health publications showcased that alternative medicine is growing and people use alternative medicine more often than primary care providers; interestingly enough, more than half of alternative medicine visits are associated with chiropractors [3]. The chiropractic approach in treating neuromuscular and spine diseases always goes without using any medications. This kind of approach can drastically eliminate not only opioid misuses globally but locally as well, as opioid crisis has already reached alarming rate in major cities of the United States.

Another beneficial option of adding chiropractic care to the global health arena is cost-effective teaching and technique exchange rounds. While many surgical techniques take significant amount of time and require special environment, chiropractic technique exchange and education rounds could be easily integrated in any given hospital and requires minimal equipment such as chiropractic adjusting table and x-ray machine -which most of the hospitals house already. This easy hospital set up can potentially improve lives of thousands at fraction of surgical intervention cost in LMICs [5].

Conclusion

Global healthcare experts are constantly challenged by demand for medical professionals' help worldwide, in order to effectively address the ever-growing need for a quality medical care in low and middle-income countries. A good amount of scientific research has been published throughout the world on traditional medicine and how it can help, however non-traditional medicine has been neglected in the past.

In the new era of evidence-based chiropractic medicine, chiropractic doctors can now bridge the gap in treating more than dozen of patients in a single visit to LMICs and provide a holistic approach to healing the body and establishing a trusting relationship between local physicians and chiropractic doctors.

Great examples are the University of Buffalo and University of South Florida Neurosurgery departments – they both utilize full time doctors of chiropractic in order to extend their rehabilitation services to the patients. It is now become a very critical situation to have a single, unified patient-centered approach for faster recovery. In the growing area of concern about global health, chiropractic doctors should actively participate in negotiation and round-table talks, as value for a good chiropractic care can no longer be mystified.

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