

Psychotherapy Guidebook

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# CHIROPRACTIC

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# Chiropractic

*Julius Dintenfass*

## DEFINITION

Chiropractic is the health profession that concerns itself with the communication and control systems of the body, particularly the nervous system, and their relationships to health and disease.

## HISTORY

Although widely separated in location, there are interesting parallels in the origin and development of the therapeutic approaches of Freud and the American, D. D. Palmer. Both have links to the brilliant eighteenth-century physician Anton Mesmer, who ripped esoteric healing from the supernatural. To Mesmer, all health or sickness had to be explained in terms of natural laws or physical forces. His investigation of bodily and mental disorders led him to demonstrate that many people could be made well by using subtle energies and forces of the body, which he called “magnetic” healing. It was his theory that “magnetic” forces acted through the body, accounting for both disorders and the process of healing. These forces could be influenced by manual contacts to the body of a static or stroking nature. He also investigated the

state of trance and determined that he could devise a basic procedure to place people in this condition for therapeutic purposes. This, of course, is now known as hypnosis.

Freud first resorted to hypnosis in his search for a better treatment of mental diseases. He learned this method, originally called mesmerism, from the famous French physician Charcot. Later, he collaborated with Josef Breuer in employing hypnosis in the treatment of cases of hysteria. In 1895, he discarded this practice for one he found to be more effective — free association. This was the kernel from which the new analytical psychiatry, psychoanalysis, was developed.

At the same time, in America, a frontier doctor, Daniel David Palmer, was practicing magnetic healing. Paul Carter, an internationally known practitioner of magnetic healing, taught him this art, which was much in vogue at that time. Palmer practiced this method with success for a period of ten years. He utilized various local body contacts, and the stroking of the body in different directions, to affect the flow of body forces or energies.

In 1895, searching for better methods to help his patients, Palmer made an extraordinary discovery. He found that the manual corrective structural adjustment, applied specifically to subluxations (minor displacements) of the vertebral column, had a more positive therapeutic potential than could be

accomplished by magnetic healing methods alone. It was this discovery that evolved into the chiropractic profession.

Palmer's revolutionary concept was that, in order to survive and function effectively, the human body must transfer information between tissue cells and organ structures in widely referable parts of the body. In 1910, Palmer frankly admitted in his book, *The Chiropractic Adjuster*, that although he was not the first person to replace a displaced vertebra manually (spinal manipulation can be traced to the ancient Greeks and Chinese), he was the first to determine the effect of the spinal adjustment upon the functions of the nervous system.

Today the chiropractor is recognized as a doctor and a primary physician by all fifty states as well as in many countries abroad. He is thoroughly trained in the healing arts at chiropractic colleges accredited by the United States Office of Education.

## **TECHNIQUE**

Contemporary chiropractic practice emphasizes a holistic approach to health and disease, utilizing modern methods of diagnosis and emphasizing nondrug therapies designed to restore and maintain the homeostatic balance of the body. These procedures include structural correction of the body by manual and mechanical means; nutritional and dietary guidance; various

instruments of physiotherapy for rehabilitation to stabilize and maintain maximum function; and guidance to help the patient obtain a proper balance between the emotional, nutritional, and mechanical aspects of health.

The unorthodoxy of the chiropractic approach has allowed it to advance into a number of new areas of knowledge relating to health and disease. This includes body-oriented procedures using specialized manual and mechanical methods of restructuring nerve pathways in order to restore normal communication. The profession has developed techniques employing light manual skin contacts to activate the neurotransmitters and receptors located in abundance in the outer coverings of our bodies. A more recent contribution is the development of applied kinesiology, which performs both diagnostic and corrective functions.

A most unique part of the chiropractic examination is known as structural analysis. This is a diagnosis of the body's compensations to the force of gravity, known as basic and compensatory compensations. It considers the fact that when a weight-bearing structure is distorted; the body automatically attempts to restore body balance by developing compensatory counter distortions. Included in this chiropractic analysis is the evaluation of the ratio of the curves of the spinal column, body posture, chronic contraction and tension of muscles, spinal fixations, joint mobility, and the kinesiological testing of muscles. These factors are of great significance in determining the



differential diagnosis of a problem and in setting up a treatment program for the patient.

## APPLICATIONS

Psychopathological reactions may be the cause of or may occur as a result of structural stress. Disturbance of psychic energy may cause muscle spasm, visceral dysfunction, distorted posture, and imbalance in muscle action and body mechanics. With these physical defects the pattern of total input and output of the nerve tracts of the musculoskeletal system is disturbed and distorted, forcing the spinal cord to deal with conflicting reports from the periphery of the body, and affecting basic vital functions. Chiropractic care, by correcting these disturbances in the neuromusculoskeletal system, reduces abnormal input to the spinal cord and the cerebrum, lowering cortical activity, allowing a return to homeostasis not only of the body but also of the mind.

This author's case history files, gathered over a period of forty years, and those of his colleagues, contain many recoveries from different phases of mental illness. These patients go to chiropractors because they are troubled by acute or chronic pain. Some patients may have old neurotic problems, whereas others may react neurotically to their present painful condition. In many instances the development of pain may trigger patterns of anxiety,

compulsion, depression, or hostility, as well as phobias complicating their condition.

The manual techniques used bring the chiropractor in close physical contact with the patient. At the same time, these manipulative procedures set in motion physiological and psychological changes. For example, when a spinal fixation is released, there are changes first in the vertebral complex: relaxation of muscle and ligament contractures and an increased flow of blood to the part with decreased irritation of local receptors. Breathing and pulse rate become more regular. Simultaneously, there is relief from pain, a feeling of ease and well-being, and a marked change in the attitude and posture of the patient. Our clinical experience shows that after completion of a period of progressive rehabilitative chiropractic care, dissipation of anxiety, hostility, depression, and other problems of mental health usually occurs.

In conjunction with chiropractic treatments, patients are taught that they must assume some responsibility for their physical state. They are involved in helping themselves to stabilize and maintain their physical improvement. They are given guidance on how to use their bodies more efficiently in their daily activities of sleep, work, and play.

I do not contend that all psychophysiological problems are responsive to chiropractic care. When the chiropractic physician recognizes that the patient

has a deep neurotic or psychotic problem, a referral is made to a psychologist or psychiatrist. There is often a successful team effort between practitioners with psychotherapy and chiropractic care proceeding simultaneously.