

Supporting the Profession Through Research ... It Starts With You

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As an undergraduate at NZCC I had the privilege of having Dr's Heidi Haavik and Kelly Holt as lecturers for research. With these two leaders at the front of the room it was hard not to get excited. I am grateful for the dedication that these individuals and their team have for advancing the profession through research. They continue to step outside the box as they attempt to scientifically explain the miracles that we see in our practices on a daily basis. Whilst I am in awe of the work that they do, I know that that is not my calling. However I believe that there is a place for us all within the profession to contribute to advancing chiropractic through research. Committing to writing proposals, applying for ethical approval and spending hours on end in the lab is not the only way.

If you want to contribute to research that reflects what actually happens in our offices day in and day out, then the case report is a great place to start. If we want to be able to stand up and speak of the true benefits of chiropractic care then we have to take personal responsibility.

Let your clinical reality guide the future of our profession. Organisations with vested interest, money and ideas for a limited future of the profession are providing us with back pain, musculoskeletal focused research, which then leads to boards around the world defining our scope of practice. Is this what is best for the health of our communities?

Up until now the incongruency between what we communicate to the public about what chiropractic can do and the changes we actually see in our practices is blatantly obvious.

Thankfully, The Australian Spinal Research Foundation has a vision beyond this and it's



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possible for us to support the Foundation and those dedicated researches at a more 'grass roots' level. I'm not just talking about buying a raffle ticket (but don't stop that) I'm suggesting by significantly increasing the amount of case reports based on the changes you see on a daily basis we can start to tell a different story about chiropractic. A story that better reflects what we actually do in our practices, and a story that will allow us to touch the lives of more and more people.

Case reports provide the foundation from which the RCT's and systematic reviews stem from. They open the door for further research that can provide a framework of how chiropractic can best contribute to healthcare in the future.

The following provides you with an easy step-by-step method that will allow you to prepare your own case report for publication. I would like to acknowledge in particular Dr Kelly Holt for allowing me to share his lecture notes with you.

Guide to Writing a Case Report

1. Choose a Case:

When choosing a case, don't feel like you have to wait until the blind see again before you can contribute. It is the everyday things (that you probably don't see as miracles anymore), despite them having a huge effect on that person's life.

2. Conduct a Literature Review:

Identify what has already been documented on this subject. Start with the following:

- Medline (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>)
- Index to Chiropractic Literature (www.chiroindex.org/)
- Google Scholar (scholar.google.com/)

3. Get Patient Consent:

Although you will not be using their names in the report, it is still recommended that you get written consent in the event of publishing the report.

4. The Report:

1. Title: Should be an accurate and succinct description including:
 - a. Intervention named
 - b. Outcome of intervention
 - c. Population under study
 - d. Condition of interest
2. Abstract: Is a summary of the whole report that will be entered into computer databases and indexing systems. It should include:
 - a. Objective / Purpose
 - b. Clinical features
 - c. Intervention and outcome
 - d. Conclusion

e. Key words

3. Introduction: Outline the purpose of the paper by providing a background to the condition of interest including incidence, etiology and prognosis. Include a brief overview of your findings in the literature review. Keep the introduction simple and concise (1-3 paragraphs).
4. Case Report: This is where you state the details and the facts of your report avoiding any personal reflection or inferences.
 - a. History of patient: relevant demographics (age, sex)
 - b. Chief complaint: how was it diagnosed, what measures were used (use of visual analogue scale, disability index if relevant)
 - c. Examination findings: describe your diagnostic procedures with use of any photos or diagrams (neuros, orthos, posture, x-ray, scans etc)
 - d. Type of care: technique protocol, frequency and duration, adjusting instruments utilised
 - e. Result of care: Your post care findings including how these outcomes were measured (use of tables and illustrations are useful)
5. Discussion:
 - a. Overview of condition and how it is traditionally managed and to what effect
 - b. Discuss how you ruled out other DDX's (if relevant)
 - c. Provide a rationale for the management choices you made (technique, frequency and duration)

- d. Provide your hypothesis and suggestions to the outcomes of care
 - e. Identify potential faults in the report (outcome measures, detail of records)
6. **Conclusion:** A powerful conclusion is kept concise and does not summarise the entire case. Link back to your purpose and focus on what the take home message is for the reader. How do these findings apply to chiropractic? Avoid offering any far-reaching and unsupported claims and finish with a call to action - what future research is needed based on your case.
7. **Acknowledgements:** It is important to acknowledge any colleagues who contributed to the case report. Ensure you have their written consent to be acknowledged in the event of publication.
8. **References:** Guidelines on how to reference will be available from each journal's publication requirements.
 - a. Use appropriate formatting
 - b. Ideally your references will be recent and primarily from peer reviewed journals
 - c. Illustrate that you have done a thorough literature review
9. **Tables and Figure Captions:** Refer to publication requirements on correct formatting of these. Correct captions and permission of use is essential.

5. Publication:

If you are going to go to the extent of writing the report, naturally submitting for publication is the final step. Ensure you research the potential journal you would like to submit your report to and follow the

publication requirements of that journal. Applying for submission is easy and can be done online or by email.

It's time for us to roll up our sleeves and take time out of our Wednesdays off to put pen to paper. So let's get to work - I challenge every ASRF member to submit one case report per year. Imagine the effect of 500 case reports documenting the miracles we see in practice being added to the literature.

It is my sincere hope that this outline has encouraged you, reminded you the process is far from intimidating and has motivated you to action.

See you in the Journal!

"I must do something" always solves more problems than "Something must be done."
~Author Unknown

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