



## The Health Information Brochure: A Useful Tool for Chiropractic Practice?

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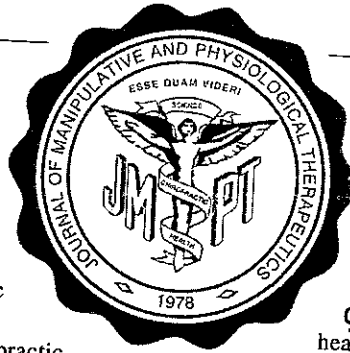
### ABSTRACT

**Background:** It has been suggested that clinicians should be looking at new ways to enhance their patients' self-care. Patient education is one strategy that primary providers may use.

**Objective:** This study investigates the format in which patients would like to pursue their health education within the chiropractic clinic.

**Methods:** An exploratory study of chiropractic patients was undertaken to investigate patients' preferred health education formats, their commitment to pursuing health objectives, and their literacy level. Purposive sampling of 9 Australian chiropractic clinics was undertaken. Convenience sampling of patients attending these clinics resulted in 102 patients participating. Participants completed a questionnaire. A research assistant was available to clarify any questions. Data were collected and collated. A Likert scale was used to capture responses to questions ascertaining patient opinions.

**Results:** Patients considered health the most important of the life objectives listed; however, they preferred spending time



with family to undertaking health- and fitness-promoting activity. More chiropractic patients opted for health information brochures than health promotion classes, personally supervised self-care programs, or practitioner-supervised self-care contracts. Patient literacy levels varied within and between clinics.

**Conclusions:** Brochures may provide a definitive health information tool for chiropractors who limit their clinical role to primary contact and a helpful adjunct to patient education for chiropractors committed to a primary care role. However, care should be taken to select brochures consistent with the patients' literacy level. Tips for selecting and preparing suitable brochures are provided. The discrepancy between how greatly patients value health and how they prefer spending their time may have implications for successful behavior change. Brochures may not alone constitute adequate practitioner involvement. (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2001;24:331-4)

**Key Indexing Terms:** Chiropractic; Health Information; Brochures; Readability

### INTRODUCTION

It has been postulated that "better health care will not depend on some new therapeutic standard, but on the level of willingness and competence to engage in self-care."<sup>1</sup> Some authorities suggest "self-care should be seen as central to all clinical interventions and clinicians should be looking for new ways to involve people in their own health care."<sup>2</sup> Primary practitioners are uniquely positioned to promote their patients' health through self-care. An earlier study of Australian patients suggested that there may be support among chiropractic patients for general health informa-

tion.<sup>3</sup> Trends in both this and another study furthermore suggested that information on exercise-fitness and stress management presented in a brochure format may be in greatest demand.<sup>3,4</sup>

Because health education is a time-consuming and demanding activity, it would seem prudent to identify the health education presentation formats of interest to chiropractic patients. I therefore decided to undertake a pilot study to investigate the format in which chiropractic patients would most appreciate receiving their health information messages. Because the success of health information is ultimately determined by the personal commitment of each individual, I also decided to explore how greatly chiropractic patients value health.

### METHODS

An exploratory study was undertaken to investigate the preferred health education formats, the health promotion commitment, and the literacy level of chiropractic patients. A convenience sample of patients attending the clinics of 9 chiropractors practicing in New South Wales, the ACT, South Australia, and Victoria was taken. Consistent with the maximum variation strategy of sampling, care was taken to

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