

THE CHIROPRACTIC CONSULTATION: A STRESSFUL EXPERIENCE?

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Psychosocial stress has been linked to compromised health status. Prolonged exposure to minor problems has been found to have an equal or greater impact on health status than exposure isolated major events. Stress is, however, determined by the reaction of the individual to a stimulus; stress responses can be managed, and ill health outcomes can be minimized. This paper explores the stress level associated with the chiropractic consultation.

METHOD: A case study using closed questions. Purposive sampling of chiropractors by the researcher and convenience sampling of patients by participating chiropractors was undertaken. Chiropractors and patients completed closed questions on the level of stress they believed patients associated with the chiropractic consultation.

RESULTS: A case study of 25 chiropractors and 137 patients found that although the chiropractic consultation was not regarded as stressful by most patients, some patients found adjustment stressful. Chiropractors assessment of perceived stress varied according to the patient. The trend was for practitioners to over-estimate the stress felt by the patient.

CONCLUSION: Chiropractors demonstrated the personalised nature of their care by the specificity of their responses to each patient. The importance of explaining the adjustment and the sensation which patients are likely to experience, particularly in new patients, is confirmed. The desirability of scrutinizing the patient for evidence of stress and of using diverse strategies for minimising the stress response are discussed. Although the chiropractic consultation is not generally regarded as a stress provoking experience, chiropractors should actively screen their patients for evidence of stress and take steps to enhance their patients' perceptions of the chiropractic consultation as a stress-free experience.

Key Indexing Terms: Stress, Chiropractic, Consultation