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Local Doctor Calls for Further Research

**Study Shows Chiropractic Care Can
Benefit Autistic Children**

(September 18, 2006 Briarcliff Manor, NY) The past decade has seen the number of diagnosed cases of autism rapidly increase throughout the nation. These alarming numbers have Briarcliff Manor-based Dr. Robert A. Abbruzzese pointing to a study that indicates that chiropractic care may alleviate – at least to some degree – some of the associated symptoms of autism.

Dr. Abbruzzese references a study published this year in *Clinical Chiropractic*. The study showed that spinal manipulation (particularly upper cervical adjusting) may help with some symptoms of autism. It cannot cure or treat the underlying disease process, but for patients with autism, it may be the symptoms of autism that are the most distressing.

“Although the results of this study are promising, further research is clearly needed,” said Abbruzzese, who follows scientific developments in the chiropractic profession quite closely.

Autism is a life-long developmental disability that affects social interaction, communication and imagination. There are no medications that can cure autism,

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but drugs can relieve and treat symptoms – such as aggression and hyperactivity – thus helping autistic individuals cope with their disease. Even though the exact causes for the disease are still unknown, current research mainly focuses on genetics; however, environmental factors and imbalances in neurochemistry may also be involved. There is no single, unique measure of abnormality found in autism, because the spectrum of autistic conditions and symptoms is wide ranging – from severe disability in some patients to mild problems of communicating and understanding in others with average and above average intelligence.

Parents first become concerned about their child's behavior – particularly the absence of play – when their child is around 18 months old. Earlier detection, however, is possible. According to Jane Jennings and Martina Barker of the Newbury Chiropractic Center in Berkshire, Great Britain, a simple checklist can help parents evaluate early on whether their child might be autistic: Does the child pretend play? Does the child use his or her index finger to point, to indicate interest in something? Does the child take an interest in other children? Does the child enjoy playing peek-a-boo or hide-and-seek? And does the child ever bring objects over to you to show you something? If the answer to two or more questions is “no,” autism may be a factor because it impairs the way the child communicates, relates to other people and understands emotional expressions.

During the aforementioned study, researchers carried out a series of chiropractic adjustments on 26 autistic children over a 9-month period. The results were an improvement in certain reflexes and sensations, an increase in neck range of motion, and improvement of other health problems.

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Many of the children were taken off Ritalin; their bladder and bowel control improved; some children started to speak, eye contact and attention span improved while hyperactivity and aggressive behavior were reduced. Also, five children were able to attend regular classes at school for the first time.

The autistic children suffered from neurological interference that hindered their development. The researchers concluded that correcting what chiropractic calls vertebral subluxation can positively affect local neurological function and cause an overall improvement. Even though there was no control group to back up the findings, the results are encouraging: They show that chiropractic care may improve the quality of life of autistic children by relieving some of the symptoms of their disease.

“To the extent that chiropractic care can have a positive effect, that is beneficial; but improving the quality of life for autistic children is just a first step toward the ultimate goal of erasing autism,” concluded Abbruzzese.

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Editor’s note:

Anyone wishing more information may contact Dr. Abbruzzese, whose office is located at 522 North State Road Briarcliff Manor, NY10510 (914-762-8800).

Reference Material:

“Autism: A Chiropractic Perspective” by Jane Jennings and Martina Baker of the Newbury Chiropractic Centre, Newbury, Berkshire, UK, published in *Clinical Chiropractic* (2006), Vol. 9, pp. 6-10.