

## Stroke and Chiropractic: Sorting Fact from Fiction

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While it would seem logical that anyone concerned about errors in patient management might spend their time and effort on where the most damage is occurring, this is apparently not the case. We have reports, such as the Institute of Medicine's, telling us that nearly 100,000 people die every year due to medical error and that these errors cost us \$37.6 billion a year.<sup>1</sup> Amazingly, based on that report organized medicine then says it needs billions of dollars from our government to try and find out why they are killing so many and to search for ways to stop it.<sup>2</sup> They are literally asking the very people they are killing (American taxpayers) to pay to fix the problem they created. A problem that leaves the United States ranked 37th in overall health system performance by the WHO.<sup>3</sup>

Lucian Leape, M.D. told us several years ago that the carnage of medical error is equal to two fully loaded jumbo jets crashing every other day.<sup>4</sup> A recent report in the Journal of the American Medical Association stated that the numbers suggest that more Americans are killed in US hospitals every 6 months than died in the entire Vietnam War. The authors went on to state: "If these numbers are correct, the health care system is a public health menace of epidemic proportions."<sup>5</sup>

The IOM report and others tell us that medical errors and malpractice rank anywhere from the 3rd to the 8th leading cause of death. More Americans are killed by medical error and malpractice every year than by car accidents, breast cancer, AIDS, cardiovascular disease and even handguns.<sup>6</sup> According to Dr. John Eisenberg, Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, "If the fifth leading cause of death was a disease, we'd invest hundreds of millions of dollars trying to understand its cause and research for new drugs. We've got to pay that kind of attention to this cause of death."<sup>7</sup>

While I agree with Dr. Eisenberg that we have to pay attention to this cause of death, I prefer Dr. Leape's analogy. If fully loaded planes started falling out of the sky every other day, nobody would fly and the airline industry would be dragged into Congressional Hearings. It would be the airline industry's responsibility to find out and explain why it's happening.

With this in mind and the recent attention being given to the issue of chiropractic and stroke, the Editor and Publisher of JVSJ decided to devote an entire issue of the Journal to this topic. We start out with an article by Dr. Ari Cohn who reviews the literature concerning the incidence of stroke related to chiropractic care and also compares it to the rate of complications of commonly accepted medical procedures. Additional items that will make up this Special Issue include Editorials from JVSJ Publisher Dr. Terry Rondberg and JVSJ Editorial Board Member Dr. Christopher Kent. You will not want to miss two excellent articles by Dr. Adrian Wenban including a Critical Appraisal of the issue and his article on the science of epidemiology and its relationship to stroke and chiropractic. We'll also have some letters to the Editor (and welcome you to submit yours) and we'll have an Editor's Perspective.

Is there risk from undergoing chiropractic care? Of course nothing in this world is without risk. However, we must look at the evidence and decide if it is politically and financially motivated or if it based on real science. Further, it is suggested that those studying risk in health care concentrate their resources where the greatest threat exists: the trillion dollar medical and pharmaceutical industrial complex that kills and cripples more Americans every year than our most feared scourges.

### References

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