



The value of case reports for informing subluxation research funding

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Abstract: The Australian Spinal Research Foundation (ASRF) is conducting a project to gather case reports about chiropractic practice where presentations other than pain and musculoskeletal dysfunction are addressed. The express purpose is to enrich the literature with practice-based reports of conditions which may represent the impact of subluxation on the expression of health and well-being.

These published reports inform the Board of the ASRF with its decision-making around selecting which research activity to fund from responses to its annual call for Expressions of Interest. This short paper identifies four particular projects currently funded and being undertaken around the world.

The ASRF is grateful for the practice-based clinicians contributing to the Case Report Project and will shortly report on progress of the major funded research activities.

Indexing Terms: chiropractic; psychotherapy; compassion; patient-focussed care.

Introduction

The Australian Spinal Research Foundation (ASRF) is a global research Foundation that has, over the last 45 Years, funded or co-funded approximately 250 research projects, an investment of over AUD\$2.9 Million. We investigate the impact of chiropractic care on the quality of life of an individual and the wellbeing of their community, with a focus on better understanding subluxation and its role in chiropractic practice. We do this by funding scientifically testable research drawing on the philosophical tenets of chiropractic.

Our **Mission** is to fund and facilitate research, and educate chiropractors, communities and peak bodies on the effectiveness of chiropractic care. We are a non-profit organisation supported through the generosity of our members, Donors, Commercial Supporters and Fundraisers. We don't receive funding from governments or other politically motivated institutions, and therefore our research direction is not influenced by outside entities.

... I wonder if compassion alone isn't enough and that not only should the healer have compassion for their patient's struggle but also see their patient in their optimum health'

In addition to our annual Grants Program, we launched the inaugural [ASRF Case Report Project](#) in 2021, which is designed to capture our communities' stories and transform them into much-needed case reports focused on the effects of chiropractic care on clinical presentations such as stress, immunity and adaptability. This has been a huge success and was funded through our annual [Spinal Research Hero Month](#). The 2021 ASRF Case Report Project resulted in 30+ Case Reports published in the [Asia-Pacific Chiropractic Journal](#) (APCJ) which is a valuable addition to the global body of chiropractic research. We now have the pleasure of exploring and developing the next series of case reports that have been submitted by practitioners around the world through the 2022 project, the first of which is published in this edition [here](#).

The value of case reports

Case reports are important for many reasons, not the least being they create a foundation of research that supports and informs proposals for future research studies. They also give us some great insights into the outcomes that Chiropractors are seeing in their practices around the world. For example, we saw reports that indicate that the practice of using chiropractic care to reduce subluxations may result in improvements in immune system function in those with allergies, (1) autoimmune diseases like Lupus, (2) sleeping challenges (2,3) and energy levels. (3)

Additionally, subluxation-based care was shown to impact the adaptability of the subjects discussed in case reports related to memory, balance and hearing, (4) as well as digestion, coordination, (5) bedwetting (6) and other areas of physical adaptability in children. (7, 8, 9) Many more findings are emerging, all of which support the work being undertaken around the world by chiropractic researchers.

Beyond case reports

There have been a number of formal research studies funded by the ASRF that explore subluxation and its role in chiropractic, with a recent focus on the areas of stress, immunity and adaptability, flowing on from the Case Report Project. The intention behind this collection of work is to build a layered body of evidence to support the way the chiropractic profession is able to discuss the efficacy of chiropractic.

Current works being undertaken by ASRF-funded researchers include studies being conducted by Dr Jonathan Little (*University of British Columbia*), looking at the impact of a corrective model of chiropractic care on immune cell phenotype and function, and Dr William Reed (*University of Alabama at Birmingham*), who is exploring the effects of chiropractic care on pro and anti-inflammatory cytokine levels in multiple sclerosis. In addition, the ASRF has funded several exciting studies around chiropractic and immunity that are currently being conducted by the *New Zealand Chiropractic College*, with results due over the next couple of years.

Most recently, a study by Dr Adrian Wenban (*Barcelona College of Chiropractic*) has been approved for funding. This study aims to investigate the effects of chiropractic adjustments on brain function, specifically the prefrontal cortex (PFC), using functional MRI (fMRI) and advanced computational methods e.g. multivariate pattern decoding. This is a first of its kind fMRI study that would allow identification and localisation of the changes at neural level that may underlie the positive effects of chiropractic care on emotion regulating behaviour.

All of the above work builds upon the findings from the existing and emerging case reports, to not only support chiropractors in their practice but to build credibility in the chiropractic research space in the eyes of decision makers in the health arena. Synopses of all of these ongoing ASRF Funded projects can be found [here](#). We anticipate some great outcomes from these studies in the near future, and look forward to the important information coming out of the 2022 ASRF Case Report Project, as well as those to come in 2023 and beyond.

Conclusion

In order to bring together some of the research in this area, the ASRF has build a synergistic relationship with the APCJ to publish a narrative review of current literature pertaining to

subluxation in chiropractic literature, as seen here. This review looks at recent evidence published in the years 2019-2022. The research team used standard methods of inquiry to identify 135 articles.

Each was examined providing evidence that case report data features highly in subluxation-related papers.

New journals such as *The Journal of Contemporary Chiropractic*, and the *Asia Pacific Chiropractic Journal* have contributed greatly to the Open Access evidence base, while *McCoy Press* and the *International Journal for Practicing Chiropractors* continue to carry a wide range of case report data. It's an exciting time for chiropractic research, and we look forward to seeing significant growth in the field over the coming years.

If you would like to support the work of the ASRF, you can become a Member or donate [here](#).

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