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## **Arthritis and Low Back Pain:** **Chiropractic Care vs. Heat Treatment**

By Mark Studin and William Owens | June 2010

### **Interesting facts about back pain:**

1. One-half of all working Americans state that they experience back pain each year.
2. One of the most common reasons people call out of work is back pain. It is also the second most common reason for a visit to the doctor's office.
3. Back pain is often mechanical or non-organic, meaning it is not caused by a serious condition, such as inflammatory arthritis, infection, fracture or cancer.
4. At least \$50 billion per year is spent by Americans on back pain.
5. Experts estimate as much as 80% of the population will experience a back problem at some time in their lives.

### **What Causes Back Pain?**

The back is made up of bones, joints, ligaments and muscles. Ligaments can be sprained, muscles can be strained, disks can rupture, and joints can be irritated. All of these can result in back pain. It doesn't always take a major event like a sports injury or an accident to cause back pain. Even the simplest of movements, like picking a small object up from the floor, can have painful results. There are also numerous conditions that can cause or complicate back pain, such as arthritis, poor posture, obesity, and psychological stress. Disease of the internal organs, such as kidney stones, kidney infections, blood clots, or bone loss, can also result in back pain.

The most common form of arthritis is called osteoarthritis. It is also known as degenerative joint disease and is a disease of the joints. It affects more than 20 million American adults. The cause of osteoarthritis is a breakdown of cartilage, the connective tissue that provides a cushion between the bones of the joints. Healthy cartilage is what permits bones to move over one another and acts as a shock absorber during physical movement. Those afflicted with this disease experience a breakdown of cartilage that wears away. As a result, the bones under the cartilage rub together, resulting in pain, swelling, and loss of joint motion.

## **What Causes Osteoarthritis?**

There is often no known cause of osteoarthritis. Risk factors include:

1. Age – More people over the age of 45 are affected by osteoarthritis
2. Female – Osteoarthritis more often affects women than in men
3. Particular hereditary conditions like defective cartilage and joint deformity
4. Joint injuries that result from sports, work-related activity or accidents
5. Obesity

## **Signs and Symptoms of Osteoarthritis**

Osteoarthritis often begins at a slow rate. Early on, joints may be sore after physical work or exercise. The pain of early osteoarthritis dissipates and then returns over time, particularly as a result of overuse of the affected joint . Other symptoms may include:

1. Swelling or sensitivity in one or more joints, especially when related to a change in the weather
2. Loss of joint flexibility
3. Stiffness in the joint(s) after getting out of bed
4. Either a crunching feeling or sound resulting from bone rubbing on bone
5. Bony lumps on the finger joints or at the base of the thumb
6. Intermittent or regular pain in a joint

**In 2006, "...an experimental design was used to compare the effects of chiropractic care (and moist heat) to the effects of moist heat alone for treating lower back pain that is secondary to [arthritis] of the lumbar spine" (Beyerman, Palmerino, Zohn, Kane, & Foster, 2006, p. 107). This was the first study of its kind. There were 3 parameters measured, pain, mobility and activities of daily living. The results conclusively revealed in every metric analyzed that chiropractic care rendered significantly better results, rendering greater relief of pain and significantly more mobility had been restored.**

**Low back pain and osteoarthritis is a very common condition treated daily in chiropractor's offices nationwide. This study confirms scientifically the clinical results treating chiropractors have been experiencing for over 100 years. The degree to which pain interferes with aspects of daily living was statistically measured, specifically with walking, sitting and social life and those test subjects under chiropractic care had superior results that simply utilized moist heat.**