



# NEWS & VIEWS

## Chiropractic for Infants: A Look at the Evidence

Written by Jeanne Ohm, DC

Parents often ask why a newborn baby should be checked by a chiropractor. Adjustments help alleviate spinal subluxations (misalignments of the vertebrae) caused by intrauterine constraint, abnormal positioning in the uterus and spinal distress from the journey through the birth canal or during the delivery process itself. Ideally, babies should be checked and adjusted as soon as possible after birth.

Gottlieb,<sup>1</sup> a well-published researcher, reviewed the effects of the birth process and concluded "the trauma from the birth process remains an under-publicised, and therefore significantly under-treated, problem".

Towbin<sup>3</sup>, a prominent researcher on birth trauma reports "survival of the newborn is governed mainly by the integrity and function of the vital centers in the brain stem. Yet, paradoxically, the importance of injury at birth to the brain stem and spinal cord are matters which have generally escaped lasting attention".

Another published researcher, Guttmann<sup>4</sup>, reported that more than one thousand infants were examined and it was concluded that approximately 80% of all newborns had some form of nerve dysfunction.

Gutmann concluded that many health problems can arise from misalignment of the first vertebrae in the neck, resulting in a lowered resistance to infections in the ears, nose and throat. He also noted, however, that even an adjustment using the lightest pressure of the index finger could normalise an infant's clinical picture.

His colleague, V. Fryman<sup>5</sup>, examined 1,250 babies five days after birth and found that 95% of this group were not only misaligned but also had cervical strain. She also noted that the infants responded with immediate muscular relaxation and had a greater ability to sleep after specific spinal adjustments. Renowned researcher and practitioner Biedermann<sup>6,7</sup> has done numerous clinical studies relating upper cervical misalignment in the newborn to prolonged labor and

the use of extraction devices. He too has recorded significant improvements in the health of infants who receive specific adjustments after birth.

Nerve dysfunction associated with birth trauma may result in breathing weakness, mood irritability, digestive disorders, difficulty with feeding and attachment, sleeping problems, immunity deficits and neurological impairment to name a few. Left uncorrected, subluxations and their resulting nerve system dysfunction may develop into numerous health issues for the baby.

Recently, the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association (ICPA) published the preliminary results of their study in *Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing*, in an article entitled, 'The Safety and Effectiveness of Pediatric Chiropractic: A Survey of Chiropractors and Parents in a Practice-Based Research Network'<sup>8</sup>. The preliminary data confirms what chiropractors have known for over 100 years: chiropractic care for children is safe and effective.

On the issue of safety, out of 5,438 office visits, there were only three minor aggravations reported from the adjustments, a .00055% chance of negative reaction. Being well below a 1% risk factor, this study shows that children have a 99% chance of no problems receiving chiropractic care. The study showed that the three aggravations reported were minor discomfort following the adjustment and were readily resolved with continued adjustments.

In the study, over 90% of the chiropractors and parents reported an adjustment-related improvement with respect to the children's presenting complaints. Even more interesting is the discovery of benefits unrelated to the presenting complaints. Both parents and doctors reported better sleeping patterns, improved behavior and more robust immune system function while under chiropractic care.

With the increased amount of scientific research supporting clinical experience, chiropractic care is being accepted as a viable necessity for newborns.

(continued next page)

## References:

1. Gottlieb MS. Neglected spinal cord, brain stem and musculoskeletal injuries stemming from birth trauma. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* 1993 Oct; 16(8):537-43.
2. Ritzmann, D Birthing interventions and the newborn cervical spine in Manual Therapy of Children, Biedermann, H ,Churchill Livingston, 2004 Chapter 7: 80
3. Towbin, A, Latent spinal cord and brain stem injury in newborn infants. *Dev Med Child Neurol.* 1969 (Feb);11(1): 54-68
4. Gutmann G. Blocked Atlantal Nerve Syndrome in Babies and Infants. *Manuelle Medizin.* 1987; 25:5-10
5. Fryman VM. Springall P Effect of Osteopathic Medical Management on Neurologic Development in Children JAOA. 1992;92:729
6. Biedermann, H Manual Therapy in Children: Proposals for an Etiologic Model, *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, Volume 28, Issue 3, Pages e1-e15
7. Biederman, H. Kinematic imbalances due to suboccipital strain in newborns. *Journal of Manual Medicine* 1992; 6:151-156
8. Alcantara J, Ohm J, Kunz D. The safety and effectiveness of pediatric chiropractic: a survey of chiropractors and parents in a practice-based research network. *Explore: The Journal of Science & Healing* View Abstract here: [http://icpa4kids.com/research/published\\_papers/Ped\\_Safety.htm](http://icpa4kids.com/research/published_papers/Ped_Safety.htm)



As Executive Director of the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association and instructor for their 360 Hour Diplomate Program, Dr Ohm travels internationally offering classes on chiropractic in pregnancy and for newborns. Dr Ohm is Executive Editor of *Pathways to Family Wellness Magazine* and founder of *Makin' Miracles...Connecting Kids and Chiropractic*.