



THE PEDIATRIC PRACTICE

Caring for Kids: How Do I Begin & Where Do I Start?

By Joan Fallon, D.C., F.I.C.C.P.

One of the most frequent questions I am asked by other chiropractors is, "I want to see children in my practice; how do I begin and where do I start?" If you ask some of the pediatric experts in the field like Maxine McMullen, Peter Fysh and others, they will most likely agree that many doctors of chiropractic want to see children in their practices but have little idea about how to begin. Some days I will field as many as 10-15 calls from doctors asking questions about their own children's health problems or their patients, but most often, how do they go about including children in their practices.

While most chiropractors are schooled at least to some degree in taking care of children, seeing well children, sick children, disabled children, child athletes, children with learning disabilities or even children with normal developmental milestones, can become a challenge and potentially overwhelming. Some chiropractors say, "Well I know what to do with the children when I see them, I can adjust them. But I just can't get them into my office. I see their parents, and I talk to them about their children, but I just can't get them to bring them in." Others will say, "I want to see children, but I'm not sure that I can." These are common refrains, and ones that the profession needs to overcome and conquer, for chiropractic care is meant for people of all ages and that means from birth.

In this article I will outline a five step process to help chiropractors who want to care for children in their practices. These do not include any tricks or gimmicks, or one day events to "attract hundreds of children," but ethical and practical practices that will help to establish a solid foundation for pediatric care in your practice and withstand the test of time.

STEP 1 – GET EDUCATED

Education is the key to seeing children in clinical practice. While some receive significant education and experience in the student clinic while in chiropractic school, others see few children if any during their time in school and in early practice.

In 2006 the ICA Council on Chiropractic Pediatrics completes 15 years of "educating" DCs in pediatrics with its Annual Conference on Chiropractic and Pediatrics. Why did ICA start these conferences? Because it realized that there was a need for pediatric education. In the early years the conferences had to be given twice during the same year as we were unable to accommodate all of the registrants in one venue. But providing continuing education at one conference is not enough education for doctors who want to have pediatric practices. Under the pioneering leader-

ship of Dr. Maxine McMullen, the ICA went further, establishing a Council and a three-year postgraduate program. In 2006 the first graduating class of Pediatric Diplomates (DICCPS) will celebrate its 10th anniversary. What do those first graduates have to say 10 years later... they got EDUCATED and that is why they are where they are today — with successful pediatric practices.

ICA made pediatrics into a discipline within chiropractic because it believed and still believes that looking after chil-

dren requires a special education.

I am not suggesting that everyone who wants to care for children should take the 3-year diplomate program, but some education is necessary and on a continuing basis. Today there are many programs, seminars and other educational experiences in pediatrics offered by different organizations, individuals and institutions. If you want to care for children you need to avail yourself of these educational opportunities. But choose your class or program wisely. It is important that various areas of pediatric practice are covered in your postgraduate education, not just one. Chiropractic pediatrics is NOT only about technique. Multiple areas should be part of your educational experience; your education needs to be well-rounded. Scrutinize the content of the program to ensure that when you are done you will have the knowledge and skills to provide care that is both effective and safe.

STEP 2 – COMMUNICATE

Communication needs to be open and constant. One of the most impor-

tant ways to educate your patients about the importance of chiropractic is to communicate that importance. Remember you cannot properly educate someone about chiropractic at a mall or at a spinal screening, but you can educate them in a health care class or in your office.

Your office should NOT be so full of information that patients and visitors get confused with all the brochures, flyers, etc. Posters which talk about the "deadly effects of vaccination" or "death through subluxation" are NOT going to educate your patients about chiropractic. You must be able to hand your patients solid information about chiropractic and its efficacy for children. Today's health care consumers are much more savvy than before and have the internet to go to for information which was not available to them before. If you do not subscribe to the *Journal of Clinical Chiropractic Pediatrics (JCCP)* or the *Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research (JVSR)* sign up

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