



NEW ZEALAND CHIROPRACTORS' ASSOCIATION
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Media Release

Date: 16th October 2015 – WORLD SPINE DAY

SLEEP POSTURE AFFECTS SPINAL AND BRAIN HEALTH - NEW RESEARCH PROVIDES FURTHER EVIDENCE OF CHIROPRACTIC BENEFITS

Good sleeping posture may be more important for overall health than previously thought, according to the New Zealand Chiropractors' Association (NZCA).

New research published¹ in the *Journal of Neuroscience* earlier this month, shows that body posture may affect the efficiency of the brain and spinal system's waste clearance. The research suggests that sleeping on your side may be better for your brain and the health of your spine.

Using fluorescence microscopy and radioactive tracing, researchers from the University of Virginia reported the identification of lymphatic vessels in the central nervous system. Until recently, the brain and spinal cord have been thought to lack lymphatic vessels, as they'd never been found. The researchers showed that drainage of the cerebrospinal fluid worked best in mice lying on their sides compared to those lying on their back or standing up.

Speaking on World Spine Day, the New Zealand Chiropractic Association (NZCA) explains `Building on a base of neuroscience research this work provides further insight into how our complex brain and spinal system works and how chiropractic care through various mechanisms can help spinal and overall health. We now know that the lymphatic system extends into the membranes that envelop the brain and spinal cord. We're only just beginning to understand the importance of sleep to brain

¹ <http://www.jneurosci.org/content/35/31/11034>

health but there is evidence that it is critical for memory consolidation. While these studies were performed in mice, similar lymphatic vessels are very likely present in the human brain and spinal cord, but of course further research will be needed.

‘The focus of chiropractic care is on the health and integrity of the nervous system. The spinal cord is part of the central nervous system and we now know that it processes information just like parts of the brain do² and the latest New Zealand research into the effects of chiropractic care suggests that we may have an important role to play in maximising performance and aiding recovery from a range of conditions where muscle function has been compromised.’

Earlier this year, the New Zealand College of Chiropractic Centre for Chiropractic Research published a study in the journal *Experimental Brain Research*³, which suggests that full spine chiropractic care can significantly improve brain-body communication and coordination.

NZCA adds: ‘We know that good posture is a key part of maintaining good spinal health, so we want to encourage New Zealanders to visit their chiropractor and make sure that everything is aligned and moving the way it should be. Your NZCA chiropractor will be able to advise you on ways to improve your posture and ensure you have a healthier spine. A healthier spine is a key for overall health and wellbeing.’

Each year World Spine Day is observed to encourage spinal health by disseminating information on good spinal health habits. The NZCA runs the Straighten Up New Zealand online resource www.straightenup.org.nz, which provides information for adults, children and healthcare professionals on ways to keep active and maintain spinal health by using the Just Start Walking and Straighten Up programmes.

² <http://www.queensu.ca/gazette/content/spinalcordprocessesinformationjustareasbrain>

³ Niazi IK, Türker KS, Flavel S, Kinget M, Duehr J & Haavik H. (2015) Changes in Hreflex and V waves following spinal manipulation. *Experimental Brain Research*. In press. DOI: 10.1007/s0022101441935 URL link: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s0022101441935>

The NZCA recommends having every member of the family checked by a chiropractor because a healthy spine and nerve system are vital parts of a healthy life. Alongside professional care, doing the three-minute set of simple exercises recommended by Straighten Up New Zealand (SUNZ) every day will also help to improve posture, stabilise core muscle groups, enhance health and prevent spinal disability. It is important to encourage family members and colleagues to stand or sit upright and to take frequent breaks to walk around and stretch if they have been sitting down for a while. This activity will also help prevent muscles getting tight and strained, joints from stiffening, cerebrospinal fluid from pooling and nerves from fatiguing.

SUNZ is a simple, engaging spinal exercise programme, designed to promote spinal health. The Straighten Up campaign was originally developed in the US and is now being adopted by countries all over the world. The NZCA has produced brochures and posters, and developed a website to support the campaign. Remember that it is always advisable to have any pain that is severe or not improving checked out promptly by your NZCA member chiropractor.

For more information on the Straighten Up campaign, visit www.straightenup.org.nz. Further details on the New Zealand Chiropractors' Association can be found at www.chiropractic.org.nz.