Spinal Manipulation vs. Diclofenac in Acute Low Back Pain

This past April, *Spine* published a placebo-controlled, randomized, double-bind, study comparing spinal manipulation, the NSAID diclofenac, and placebo in the treatment of acute low back pain (von Heymann, et al. Spinal high-velocity low amplitude manipulation in acute nonspecific low back pain . Spine: 2013; 38 (7): 540-548.). Specifically, the spinal manipulation provided was high-velocity, low-amplitude (HVLA) manipulation. At 12-week assessment, both interventions proved superior to placebo. The HVLA group achieved better results than the NSAID group. The HVLA trended better in use of rescue analgesics and scored significantly better in quality of life measures, disability measures, and visual analog pain scales.

The study admitted 101 subjects with acute, non-specific low back pain (less than 48 hours). Von Heymann and colleagues achieved patient blinding by giving patients in all three arms of the study a tablet and some form of manipulation. Patients in the HVLA arm received placebo diclofenac; patients in the NSAID arm received a sham manipulation; and patients in the control arm received both the placebo tablet and sham manipulation. A separate clinician, blinded to the interventions, conducted the SF-12 inventory for quality of life measures and the Roland-Morris Disability Scale. Subjects in the NSAID arm received 50 mg diclofenac tablets, three times per day, for less than 10 days. All subjects were allowed paracetamol as a rescue analgesic - not to exceed six 500-mg tablets per day. Patients with a known tolerance to NSAIDs were excluded.

In short, diclofenac was good, and high-velocity, low-amplitude spinal manipulation was better. HVLA is in the scope of practice for physical therapists, and many have taken seminars for this form of manipulation. Enfield Health & Wellness Center has the added advantage of having on staff a doctor of chiropractic, Kevin Sadowski, DC, Cert MDT. Chiropractors receive extensive training in HVLA as a part of their coursework and are much more experienced in HVLA as a group. Having a DC on staff adds to our ability to provide the most efficient treatments to physical therapy patients.

Help Your Patients Get the Care They Need Immediately. Letter of Protection Accepted.

Studies on various types of spinal injuries and other injuries show much better outcomes when thorough, active care is begun without delay. For injury cases, we accept letters of protection so more of your patients can get the care they need immediately.