



NZ CHIROPRACTORS READY TO PLAY PART IN REDUCING HARM FROM FALLS

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The New Zealand Chiropractors' Association (NZCA) has welcomed calls by the Health Quality & Safety Commission, published in the latest issue of the New Zealand Medical Journal[1], for an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to the prevention of falls, one patient at a time.

Chiropractor and NZCA spokesperson Dr Cassandra Fairest explains: 'We fully support the need for individualised responses to prevent falls one patient at a time, and for leadership responses that promote an integrated approach to reducing the risk of falls in older people. Chiropractors are uniquely placed within the healthcare spectrum as they support better spine and nervous system health which has demonstrated positive effects on balance in the older population, and therefore this would help reduce the future need for a massive increase in healthcare costs.

'A growing body of research suggests that chiropractic care may slow the rate of functional decline as you age, preserve your autonomy, improve your well-being and reduce accidents. It could also save New Zealand millions of dollars in the longer term[2].'

Falls are the leading cause of injury related hospital admissions and death in the over fifties. In 2014, 205,000 New Zealanders aged 50 or over had an ACC claim accepted for a fall-related injury, representing a 20% increase since 2011[3].

Dr Kelly Holt, Dean of Research at the New Zealand College of Chiropractic and his team recently published the results of a research study in New Zealand which has shown chiropractic care in a group aged 65 to 89 can significantly impact several factors that influence the prevention of falls2.'

Dr Fairest explains: 'After twelve weeks the group who received chiropractic care had increased ability in identifying where their ankle joint was when they closed their eyes. This is likely to prevent falls, as your brain will be more accurately aware of where your foot is without you having to look at your foot while walking.'

Dr Holt and his fellow researchers in the New Zealand study also found that older adults who received 12 weeks of chiropractic care were able to take a step much faster than the control group not receiving chiropractic care. This is an important finding, because being able to take a fast step to correct balance can assist in fall prevention. Additionally, this study showed that the older adults who received chiropractic care were able to simultaneously process visual and auditory information more accurately in their brain.

Dr Fairest adds: 'This is known to be important and relevant when it comes to preventing falls. Science has shown that as we age we appear to lose our ability to process multiple lots of sensory information accurately and that this leads to distractions that may cause falls'.

'We want to encourage New Zealanders to visit their chiropractor to ensure that their spines and nervous systems are functioning well. A local NZCA chiropractor will be able to provide advice on ways to improve posture, enhance coordination and support a healthy spine. A healthy spine and well-functioning nervous system is important for overall health and wellbeing.'

Ends

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[1] NZMJ 2 December 2016, Vol 129 No 1446 ISSN 1175-8716

[2] Holt, Kelly R et al, "Effectiveness of Chiropractic Care to Improve Sensorimotor Function Associated With Falls Risk in Older People: A Randomized Controlled Trial," Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics.

[3] Health Quality & Safety Commission. New Zealand Atlas of Healthcare Variation. Falls. <http://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/health-quality-evaluation/projects/atlas-of-healthcare-variation/falls/>.

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