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Palmer College of Chiropractic, Loyola University, Hines VA researchers and Dr. James Cox work together to understand Cox® distraction procedure for neck pain

In a ground-breaking study, medical and chiropractic researchers are joining efforts to study the effects of a form of non-surgical treatment for neck pain, more specifically Cox distraction manipulation. This study is one of three projects that are part of a four-year, \$2.8 million grant awarded in 2008 to the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research (PCCR), headquartered on the Palmer College of Chiropractic campus in Davenport, Iowa. The grant is from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine to establish a multidisciplinary Developmental Center for Clinical and Translational Science in Chiropractic, and the principal investigator is Christine Goertz, D.C., Ph.D., who also serves as Palmer's vice chancellor for Research and Health Policy. Co-leaders of the Cox distraction manipulation project are M. Ram Gudavalli, Ph.D., PCCR, and Avinash G. Patwardhan, Ph.D., Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine and Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Affairs Hospital. This study is in progress and funded through May 30, 2012. It combines the efforts of medical doctors, chiropractors, biomechanists and clinical researchers, in order to document the effects of the Cox distraction chiropractic procedure on neck pain and develop sham and active treatment parameters for conducting clinical studies.

The project, titled Cervical Distraction Sham Development: Translating from Basic to Clinical Studies, consists of three main parts. After completing the pilot studies, the formal basic research study began in March 2010 on the Cox distraction procedure for neck pain at Edward Hines VA Hospital and Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine. This study is a collaborative effort between researchers at these facilities, researchers from Palmer College of Chiropractic, clinicians who perform this technique in their practices, and Dr. James Cox, the originator of the procedure.

“As the manipulation procedure is performed, we are measuring the variability between four different clinicians trained in this procedure by measuring the loads and the controlled displacements of the table using a basic science approach as well as a clinical approach,” said Dr. Gudavalli from Palmer. “According to practicing doctors of chiropractic, this chiropractic procedure has provided relief for musculoskeletal conditions such as neck pain. However, there is a need for studies that provide information on the biomechanical characterization of such therapies, the biomechanics of normal and pathological joint and muscle systems, and the development of new technologies that study such biomechanics in real time. In other words, what physiological effect does the procedure have that is responsible for its clinical successes?”

The results of this study will aid in the planning and development of controlled procedures in the clinical setting, and test the validity of delivering the controlled procedures by conducting clinical studies and obtaining patients’ perception on the controlled intervention. This knowledge has the potential to guide the future conduct of clinical research in this area and impact training of students and doctors in the chiropractic profession.

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