

Clinical Considerations in the Chiropractic Management of the Patient with Marfan Syndrome

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OBJECTIVE: To describe the chiropractic management of a patient with whiplash-associated disorder and a covert, concomitant dissecting aneurysm of the thoracic aorta caused by Marfan syndrome or a related variant.

Clinical Features: A 25-year-old man was referred by his family physician for chiropractic assessment and treatment of neck injuries received in a motor vehicle accident. After history, physical examination, and plain film radiographic investigation, a diagnosis of whiplash-associated disorder grade I was generated. Intervention and

Outcome: The whiplash-associated disorder grade I was treated conservatively. Therapeutic management involved soft-tissue therapy to the suspensory and paraspinal musculature of the upper back and neck. Rotary, manual-style manipulative therapy of the cervical and compressive manipulative therapy of the thoracic spinal column were implemented to maintain range of motion and decrease pain. The patient achieved full recovery within a 3-week treatment period and was discharged from care. One week after discharge, he underwent a routine evaluation by his family physician, where an aortic murmur was identified. Diagnostic ultrasound revealed a dissecting aneurysm measuring 78 mm at the aortic root. Immediate surgical correction was initiated with a polyethylene terephthalate fiber graft. The pathologic report indicated that aortic features were consistent with an old (healed) aortic dissection. There was no evidence of acute dissection. Six month follow-up revealed that surgical repair was successful in arresting further aortic dissection.

CONCLUSION: The patient had an old aortic dissection that pre-dated the chiropractic treatment (which included manipulative therapy) for the whiplash-associated disorder. Manipulative therapy, long considered an absolute contraindication for abdominal and aortic aneurysms, did not provoke the progression of the aortic dissection or other negative sequelae. The cause, histology, clinical features, and management considerations in the treatment of this patient's condition(s) are discussed.

