



Nova Scotia College of Chiropractors

Position Statement: Minimum Standards and Minimum Competency to Perform Spinal Adjustments / Manipulation

*Approved by
the NSCC*

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3*

The primary objective of the Nova Scotia College of Chiropractors (NSCC) is to ensure the highest standards of education, ethics and professional competency in regards to spinal adjustments / manipulation and meet the necessary expectations of our deserving society. As such, **the NSCC upholds that the public of Nova Scotia is entitled to receive the safest and highest quality care, within this realm, as is possible.** Acting in the interest of public safety, the NSCC has adopted this position statement insisting those without the minimum standards of education, ethics and professional competency in the field of spinal adjusting / manipulation are not justified to use this type of therapy.

The spinal adjustment/manipulation denotes the manual procedure that involves a dynamic thrust to move a spinal joint complex past the physiological range of motion without exceeding the anatomical limit. It is a highly skilled therapeutic procedure that utilizes controlled force, leverage, direction, amplitude and velocity directed at a specific location within a joint complex.

The provision of safe and effective adjustive/manipulative procedures requires a high degree of skill, knowledge, manual dexterity and clinical competency acquired only through extensive training and continued application and practice.

High-risk, under-qualified health care professionals rendering spinal adjustments / manipulations, threatens public safety. As such, all providers must be educated and proven competent in all of the following:

1. Differential Diagnoses
 - When is manipulation **appropriate**?
 - When is it **safe**?
 - When do you **refer** to another professional?
2. Working Diagnoses
 - What type of manipulative procedure is best?
 - Where, specifically, is the application of this procedure warranted anatomically?
3. Clinical Application
 - How much force is needed to be safe and effective?
 - What is the precise direction of the force needed to be safe and effective?
 - What velocity is needed to be safe and effective?
 - Where precisely is the procedure applied to be safe and effective?

Without the clinical and diagnostic competency, training and proficiency, a practitioner may constitute a hazard to the public and can result in complications such as missed or inappropriate diagnosis, disc ruptures, fractures, neurovascular impediments and death.

1. Supportive Information

Chiropractic Education and Spinal Adjustment / Manipulation

Chiropractic education hours concerned **only** with Spinal Adjustments/Manipulations include:

- Psychomotor Skills and Chiropractic Principles 761 hours
- Clinical and radiological diagnosis 644 hours
- Clinical Education (internship) 1596 hours

Total **3001 hours**

A total of 3001 hours of chiropractic education is directly and specifically toward the preparation of the chiropractor to safely perform Spinal Adjustments/Manipulation. However, a chiropractic education also includes an **additional 1174** hours of related studies such as Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, Nutrition, Biochemistry, Research, and Jurisprudence

In addition, to ensure ongoing practitioner competency and public safety, the "Act" which regulates the profession of chiropractic in Nova Scotia requires all chiropractors to accumulate **24 continuing education credits every 2 years** in order to maintain licensure and good standing.

As per legislation in all provinces, chiropractors are required to have a minimum competency, training and education which is enforced by examining boards, governing agencies and departments / ministries of health. Logistically, all health care practitioners, using modes of treatment which include Spinal Adjustments/ Manipulation, should be held to the same standards of quality and safety assurance, as are chiropractors.

It order to ensure protection of the public it would be appropriate for the Department of Health to recognize the need to enforce a minimum standard, equivalent to chiropractic standards, in order for health care practitioners of any specialty to render Spinal Adjustments / Manipulation.

Points of position

1. The NSCC strongly disapproves of short-term courses, weekend courses and seminar training programs on Spinal Adjustments / Manipulation which do not meet reasonable standards of education and training. It is the blatant training deficiency that poses the greatest risk of harm to the public. As such, health care providers who complete these courses mistakenly believe they are professionally trained to render such procedures without full knowledge of the consequences if rendered inadequately.

In a 1996 article "Accepting spinal manipulation as an effective treatment", co-written by a medical physician and a chiropractor and published in the April edition (Vol.42) of the Canadian Family Physician the authors make note of the very concerns expressed in this position statement:

"... it is foolish to think that one can take a 1-day course in spinal manipulation and be competent. Chiropractors spend 4 years *[after 3 years of premedical studies]* learning the

proper techniques of manipulation, including manipulator and patient positioning, direction and depth of thrust, and how and why to isolate a specific joint. They participate in daily drills to improve and ensure a high-velocity but low amplitude thrust without taking a 'running start' at the manoeuvre. Chiropractors continue to perfect these skills, performing on average an estimated two to 500 manipulations everyday. For doctors (M.D.'s) to take a 1-day course and expect to deliver the same standard of care as chiropractors is ludicrous. This can be linked to a chiropractor taking a 1-day course in removing an appendix. Would you let him or her remove yours?"

"Manipulation is not just the manual manoeuvre but also where and when, in what order, and when not to manipulate... Positioning of the cervical spine during manipulation, excessive force, poor screening for risk factors, and lack of skill in the manipulator all contribute to adverse effects, minor or major, or even lack of positive response. Incompetence due to inadequate training can only multiply the patient's risk of adverse effects. **Why subject patients to increased risk when chiropractors are already available?"**

2. The NSCC strongly supports that all health care providers rendering Spinal Adjustments / Manipulation must have **appropriate incident protection** in order to protect the patient. (As is required of all NSCC members)
3. The NSCC strongly supports the use of "**written informed consent**", that informs the patient of the possible adverse reactions to treatment, including death by all health care providers rendering Spinal Adjustment / Manipulation (As is required by all NSCC members)

Joint manipulation is relatively safe in the hands of trained, competent and skilled health care professionals. To date, the most highly trained professional is the doctor of chiropractic. **If the standards of care are lowered or compromised, then we can expect the quality of care will be lowered and compromised**, thus increasing the risks associated with manipulative procedures.

Chiropractors are the most qualified and deliver highly effective manipulative treatment while presenting the lowest risk associated with these procedures. "**Why subject patients to increased risk when chiropractors are already available?"**

Conclusion

The NSCC supports the use of Spinal Adjustment / Manipulation by appropriately educated, trained, examined and competent health care providers only. The standards of such education, testing and ongoing clinical competency have already been determined and clearly outlined in the chiropractic act and regulations for the province of Nova Scotia.

It is the position of the NSCC that these standards are the minimum required for safe and appropriate use of spinal manipulation/adjustment and thus all persons must meet this minimum standard regardless of profession for the provision of safe and effective care for the public of Nova Scotia.

Enclosed is a current Academic Calendar for the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in Toronto.