

Midwifery and Chiropractic: Bonding for Life

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In my professional experience as a chiropractor I have had the opportunity to work with many midwives. I have come to learn that there are many similarities in the approach to healthcare between midwives and chiropractors. Both groups share an acknowledgement of, and trust in, the body's inner wisdom. Chiropractors call this wisdom "innate intelligence". When allowed to perform without interference, innate intelligence coordinates the responses to the body's needs at any given moment, thus maintaining the body's optimal health.

In chiropractic, we recognize that this inborn wisdom uses the nervous system as its conduit to transmit electrical impulses of intelligence to all systems and functions of the body, thus maintaining a state of homeostasis and balance. Mechanical pressure on the nervous system by the bones of the cranium and spine may interfere with this normal transmission of intelligence and result in a state of dis-ease. Chiropractors call this mechanical pressure on a nerve by the spine "vertebral subluxation". The specific chiropractic adjustment removes the pressure from the nervous system, restoring the pathways of transmission and therefore allowing for better overall function of the body.

Moreover, within both professions, is profound support and commitment to non-invasive birthing procedures. Chiropractors and midwives alike share a genuine respect for the process of natural birthing, encouraging the mother to follow her intuition for guidance throughout the process. Managing labor from within rather than through the use of external drugs and obstetrical procedures allows for safer and easier deliveries for both the mother and baby. When subjected to unnecessary interventions not only is a mother's well being at risk, but many times the baby is also put at risk.

A particular concern of chiropractors is when there is force applied to the baby's head and neck during delivery, as this is a cause of much birth trauma.¹ Unnatural birthing positions also add to the risk of birth trauma.² The use of drugs during labor and delivery that may interfere with the mothers' intuition of natural birthing can also contribute to the use of additional force during delivery.³ External forces applied during delivery may cause undetected injury to the baby's spine and cranium as well as to the delicate nervous system they are protecting.⁴ Sometimes these injuries are obvious, but more often than not injury has occurred during the course of normal obstetric delivery procedures that is not detected. Birth trauma may have long lasting effects on the child's future health status.⁵

Midwives and chiropractors also offer care that is personal to each individual and specific to every case. Midwives and chiropractors also share the unique ability to assess a patient's status with their own hands, and both professions are blessed with the privilege of touching others to bring about a greater expression of life.

These three common bonds have been enough to establish life-long supportive relationships between the two groups,⁶ however there is a fourth cause for alliance and reciprocity between us. It is a specific chiropractic adjustment called the Webster Technique. Developed by Dr. Larry Webster and formerly called the Webster Breech Turning Technique. This particular chiropractic adjustment was classically used during the seventh through ninth month of pregnancy. It is primarily focused on women whose babies are presenting breech or transverse. Doctors of Chiropractic reported an >85% success rate in its ability to balance pelvic structures and remove constraint to the woman's uterus therefore allowing the baby to turn into the vertex position.

Midwives around the country are hearing about this technique and seeking out chiropractors trained in its use. Alliances are forming in communities and both mothers and babies are spared the irreparable damage caused by the growing number of c-sections. Midwives are referring patients to chiropractors even before mal-presentations are evident, and their practices are reaping the benefits of overall easier, safer deliveries for both the mother and baby.

The ICPA responded to the growing demand for this skill and began a marathon of classes to train Doctors in the correct application and use of this adjustment. Today, we maintain the only database available of Chiropractors who have been tested and are proficient in the Webster Technique.

Doctors trained through the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association have learned how to apply this specific adjustment, along with other chiropractic techniques, to benefit the mother and baby throughout pregnancy. Because we are working specifically to balance pelvic muscles and ligaments with their adjustments, we are removing constraint to the woman's uterus. This allows the baby to get into the best possible position for birth in a timely manner and the need for "crisis care" in the last couple of months of pregnancy is being eliminated.

Working with chiropractors almost every weekend, I know that one of their greatest objectives is to eliminate as many variables that lead to traumatic birth and therefore injury of the newborn's spine, cranium and nervous system. To achieve this goal, we need the help of midwives! We need their valuable services and care to the women in our communities. Our growing support of midwifery will fulfill their mission for natural birthing and ours as well.

Specific chiropractic care helps to provide an environment for safer, easier, faster deliveries.¹
⁸ Midwifery care is known to do so as well.² Chiropractors make the effort to meet with and educate the midwives in your area about your valuable services. Show support and enthusiasm for their important care. Together we will restore the sanctity and right of natural childbirth.

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