Chiropractic for a Good Night’s Sleep

By Charles Masarsky, DC, FICC

Most people understand the importance of sleep in general, and for children in particular. The following patient-education article is intended to suggest the link between sleep quality and chiropractic care. Please feel free to use it for your bulletin board, lay lectures and front-desk handouts.

Common sense tells us that a good night’s sleep contributes to good health. Statistical evidence strongly supports this conventional wisdom. Adult insomnia is estimated to cost $14 billion every year in the United States.¹ The exact financial cost of sleep disorders in children is less clear, but emerging research suggests that pediatric sleep disorders contribute to attention deficit, hyperactivity, mood disturbances and memory problems.²

Last year, an international team of chiropractic researchers reported the case of a 3-year-old boy with disturbed sleep.³ He would snore loudly and have frequent episodes of breath-holding during the night. He would also wake up suddenly many times each night. The examining doctor of chiropractic found evidence of misalignment and restriction (subluxation) in the upper cervical (upper neck), mid-thoracic (between the shoulder blades), and lumbar (low back) portions of the spine. There was also asymmetry in the alignment of some of the bones of the skull.

Gentle chiropractic adjustments were administered to correct these subluxations three times per week for three weeks, and then once the following week. After this month of chiropractic care, the mother reported that the boy no longer snored or had breath-holding episodes. He was sleeping through the night without any sudden awakening.

This case is very similar to one reported by an Australian doctor of chiropractic more than a decade ago.⁴ A 12-month-old boy was waking up seven to eight times every night. After one chiropractic adjustment to correct upper cervical and mid-thoracic subluxations, he slept soundly for seven hours. At six-month follow-up, the mother described her son as a healthy toddler with normal sleeping habits.

Many parents of sleep-disturbed children are undoubtedly searching for nonpharmaceutical alternatives. While individual case reports are certainly not the "last word" in the research arena, it is important to point
out that there is now a small body of evidence indicating that chiropractic adjustments can help children with sleep problems. There is no evidence whatsoever that competent chiropractic care can make these sleep disorders worse.

References


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