Twisted Chiro

History, Regulation & False Claims

Wine Card, Mystics, Atlantis & Carlos Hoax
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Volume 40 • No 2 June 20
Ken McLeod and Mal Vickers complain about chiropractors’ pseudomedical claims, including immunity and COVID-19, and discover that ... shock horror ... they’re still at it, but regulators are not.

Early this year colleagues at Friends of Science in Medicine Inc (FSM) conducted a random search of registered health care practitioners’ advertising, searching for breaches of legislation, Codes of Conduct, advertising rules, and warnings from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and relevant professional boards. This included a specific warning from AHPRA and the Chiropractic Board reminding registered chiropractors not to engage in “false and misleading advertising on COVID-19” and warning of the significant penalties that can be applied (AHPRA - tinyurl.com/y6wjhz9q).

AHPRA and the Chiropractic Board said that they “are seeing some examples of false and misleading advertising on COVID-19” and “it is vital that health practitioners only provide information about COVID-19 that is scientifically accurate and from authoritative sources”. And they remind practitioners that “According to these authoritative sources, there is currently no cure or evidence-based treatment or therapy which prevents infection by COVID-19.”

They went on to warn that “registered health practitioners should not make advertising claims on preventing or protecting patients and health consumers from contracting COVID-19 or accelerating recovery from COVID-19. To do so involves risk to public safety and may be unlawful advertising. For example, we are seeing some advertising claims that spinal adjustment/manipulation, acupuncture and some products confer or boost immunity or enhance recovery from COVID-19 when there is no acceptable evidence in support.”

If the advertiser is a registered health practitioner, breaching advertising obligations is also a professional conduct matter which may result in disciplinary action, especially where advertising is clearly false, misleading or exploitative. There are also significant penalties for false and misleading advertising claims about therapeutic products under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.”

What could be plainer than that? Chiropractors must stop saying that spinal adjustment could “boost immunity” and could prevent and/or treat COVID19.

So armed with all of the above, we have assembled a list of chiropractors who are making those very claims and are slowly working through the list, filing formal complaints to the regulators. (These regulators are the Office of the Health Ombudsman [OHO] in Queensland, the Health Care Complaints Commission [HCCC] in NSW, and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency [AHPRA] for the rest of Australia).

So here are the recalcitrant subjects of complaints submitted to regulators since 1 March 2020, some concerning chiroquacks claiming to treat COVID 19, and some claiming to “boost immunity” which is of course not only bulldust but a breach of recent warnings from the Chiro Board and AHPRA. At no extra cost to the regulators we have included in our complaints examples of other evidence-free claims and quackery. (All claims listed below are fully verified with screen captures of the relevant websites.)

THE LIST

Neil Brodie, Perth Wellness Centre, 9 Colin St, West Perth, WA 6005:
Claims to boost immunity and specifically mentions treatment or prevention COVID 19; increase energy levels; lower blood pressure; breathe better; sells items and treatments that are claimed to “assist your immune system”.

Ken Brodie and Mal Vickers:
Claims to boost immunity and specifically mentions treatment or prevention COVID 19; increase energy levels; lower blood pressure; breathe better; sells items and treatments that are claimed to “assist your immune system”.

... and the list continues with many more chiropractors who have not heeded the warnings.
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Brian Callan, Hands on Super Health, Railway Pde Leura 2780:
Claims to boost immunity and specifically mentions treatment or prevention of COVID 19; sells Vitamin C as a possible cure for COVID 19; sells "Essential Oils - Long established as a powerful antidote to bugs of all types. Thyme, lavender doTerra On Guard blend. There are many options to kill bugs and also boost your internal defences."

Tracey Lademann, Bedford Road Ringwood East, VIC, 3135:
Claims to boost immunity and specifically mentions treatment or prevention of COVID 19; treats children's bed-wetting, allergies, feeding and attachment issues, colic and other digestive concerns, sleeping problems, ear aches, difficult turning head, acid reflux, head shape concern, poor co-ordination, poor balance, asthma, spinal posture, concentration; treating pregnancy by relieving pain, reducing labour time, encourages optimal foetal position, improves nervous system function, brain development; claims that "Vitamin C has long been known to boost immune function, but early studies are finding that high dose vitamin C might actually be able to reverse the effects of the Coronavirus"; recommends zinc as part of an anti-coronavirus plan; plugs a "quantum law of attraction and vibrational energy”, and "Neuro Impulse Protocol".

Brad Moore, Coolum Chiropractic, Shop 19, Pacific on Coolum, Birghtwill St, Coolum Beach, Qld 4573:
Claims to "boost immunity" and specifically mentions treatment or prevention of COVID 19 by treating "vertebral subluxations"; tells clients to "TAKE! Vitamin C (a well-known immune booster currently being used effectively in China to treat coronavirus), have your spine checked and adjusted regularly to maintain optimal spinal alignment. Your health depends on it!"

Cameron Ashe, Total Health, 32a Orchard Rd Brookvale NSW 2100:
Claims to “boost immunity” with spinal adjustment without mentioning COVID 19; citation of a paper that never existed; offers gift certificates.

Nathan Petridis, Balanced Life Chiropractic Health Care Level 1 1823 Burwood Hwy, Ferntree Gully, Vic 3156:
Claims to “boost immunity” via cupping to “activate the immune system” and treating subluxations.

Camille Rahme, Chiro & Sports Med, 175 Victoria Rd, Gladesville, NSW 2111:
Claims “Chiropractic adjustments have shown to boost the immune system.”

Adam Rocchi, Spine Scan, 1st Floor, 1 The Esplanade, Mount Pleasant, Perth, WA 6153:
Claims to “boost immunity” by treating subluxations; offers “tune-ups”.

Bree Weber, Olive Chiropractic, 1399C Logan Rd, Mt Gravatt, QLD 4122:
Claims to “boost immunity” by treating subluxations; claims that chiropractic treatment is safe, natural, and scientific, offers as evidence a report issued in New Zealand over 40 years ago and not available online; offers X-ray examinations without an indication; offers the “Webster Technique” for pregnant women contrary to warnings in a statement issued by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) and the Chiropractic Board of Australia on 7 March 2016. (Weber was reported to the OHO on 11 November 2016, 14 March 2018 and 17 January 2019 and clearly nothing was done.) Claims to be able to give babies a “tune-up”.

Ross Windham, Total Health, 32a Orchard Rd Brookvale NSW 2100:
Claims to “boost immunity” via “spinal adjustment”; citation of a research paper that has never existed; offers gift certificates.

Wendy Froyland, Total Health, 32a Orchard Rd Brookvale NSW 2100:
Claims to “boost immunity” via “spinal adjustments”; citation of a research paper that has never existed; offers gift certificates.

Sam Liveriadis, North Road Chiropractic, 1161 North Rd, Oakleigh, VIC 3166:
Claims to “boost immunity” via “spinal adjustment”; offers exploratory X-ray examinations without indication.

Simon Weekes, Better Back Chiropractic, 218 Onkaparinga Valley Rd, Oakbank, SA 5243:
Claims to “boost immunity” via spinal adjustment of subluxations; misrepresents a citation; claims that his treatment of pregnant women and babies results in babies with less crying, better sleep, better breast and bottle feeding, better bowel movements, general sense of a happier baby, better with tummy time, improved torticollis, contrary to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Health Council Safer Care Victoria report “Chiropractic spinal manipulation of children under 12 Independent Review” (tinyurl.com/y8m73eijn). He claims to treat “Breastfeeding, Tongue and Lip Tie;” treat flat head / plagiocephaly to restore normal head shape, using citations of research papers that do not support his claims.

Derek Silva, Rise Chiropractic, 2/85 Aerodrome Rd, Maroonydore, QLD 4558:
Claims to “boost immunity” by treating “subluxations”.

Jerome Dixon, Melbourne Wellness Group, 89 Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn VIC.
Under the heading “Corona virus” on behalf of the clinic he states “We’re also know the latest data & research on CoronaVirus and prevention” which is easily our most grammatically incorrect example.

Dennis Collis, North Cairns Chiropractic, 327 Sheridan St, Cairns North:
Advertises “Chiropractic BioPhysics”, which sounds a lot like real physics, so it must be good. He also assures that chiropractic was useful in the coming coronavirus pandemic: “it can definitely help to ensure your body is fighting ready. An adjustment can also help to prevent sickness and disease by boosting your immune system and ensuring your nervous system is functioning optimally to help heal and repair.”
Immune to Science

Continued...

Jeremy Dive, OneWay Chiropractic, 2353 Gold Coast Hwy Mermaid Beach QLD 4218:
Claims to treat subluxations “which can cause sickness and disease”; uses a 125 year old anecdote as evidence supporting his claims; uses the BICOM system was found..”

IMMUNITY … THE CHIROPRACTORS SAY NO!

The Canadian Chiropractic Association has warned members about making unsubstantiated claims: “We would be remiss to ignore the rise of misinformation at this difficult time. While we firmly believe in the efficacy and benefits of chiropractic care in supporting the health of Canadians, there is no scientific evidence that supports claims of a meaningful boost in immune function from chiropractic adjustments,” the association wrote in a post from March 16 2020. (tinyurl.com/y98skmc)

The American Chiropractic Association has issued a warning to chiropractors: “The claims of some in the profession that spinal adjustments can boost immunity and decrease the risk of contracting COVID-19 are misleading. While spinal adjustments are effective for a number of conditions, there is no quality evidence to support that they can improve immunity to COVID-19.” (tinyurl.com/yau7zgey)

The World Federation of Chiropractic in its report dated March 2020, “The Effect of Spinal Adjustment / Manipulation on Immunity and the Immune System: A Rapid Review of the Relevant Literature” (tinyurl.com/rrn73w7), concluded that: “No credible, scientific evidence that spinal adjustment / manipulation has any clinically relevant effect on the immune system was found.”

Bioresonance Therapy machine (not listed with the TGA); offers “Cold Laser Therapy and IQ Impulse”, whatever they are.

Lina Shiyanb, ChiroRelief, 208 Enmore Rd, Enmore NSW 2042:
Offers cupping; dry needling; treats animals.

We have many more chiropractors to report to the regulators. Remember the above were found in a random search, not a scouring of every website of every chiropractor in Australia. No doubt there are plenty more.

The above complaints follow 174 specific complaints about chiropractors submitted in the decade before 1 March 2020. In that time, only one specific complaint was resolved successfully, with the practitioner surrendering registration. The COAG Health Ministers/Safer Care Victoria Inquiry should be regarded as another success following formal complaints and a media uproar. We also point to the stream of warnings to chiropractors from the Chiropractic Board of Australia in response to our complaints as another success, even if these warnings are often ignored, as above.

So why have we been so unsuccessful, we hear you ask. Well, as one kind woman from one regulator explained to us at length, they can only act on the breaches reported to them. If the complaints concern only what is contained in the practitioner’s advertising, they can do nothing more than advise the practitioner to tidy up their advertising. To do more requires firm evidence of actual harm caused. (So what we really need is someone prepared to sue because their illness or injury was caused because they followed the chiropractor’s advice, and we are willing to help.)

What this means of course is that there are no on-site audits unless a complaint concerning malpractice or injury has been received.

But, it is not good enough for AHPRA, the HCCC, the OHO, and the Chiropractic Boards to refer to these matters as breaches of advertising requirements. If a chiropractor advertises bogus, exploitative and dangerous treatments it is very likely that he or she is actually conducting them. It is incumbent on the regulators to determine if they have done that in the past and will not do that in the future. Only on-site audits without notice can ensure that the regulators fulfil their charters to ensure that the public is safe.

Could you imagine a restaurant industry not subject to regular on-site inspections by health inspectors? Can you imagine an airline advertising that they use counterfeit spare parts and nobody caring? (Yes, it is a problem in the aviation industry - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unapproved_aircraft_part - and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority does care; they would descend on that airline like a ton of bricks.)

So why are the regulators of chiropractors not conducting on-site audits? We can hazard a guess that the regulators charged with ensuring public safety do not have the legislative authority and the resources. The Safer Care Victoria report called for “The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the national boards should continue to audit practitioners in the application of their guidance regarding advertising.” (Recommendation 8)

As the FSM survey showed above, even this minor checking is not happening.

So as long as their advertising is OK, nobody cares what happens in the clinic, and all 10 recommendations in the SCV Report are ignored.

Considering the dangers involved and the huge financial losses to Medicare, private health insurers, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, this is a shameful situation.

About the authors:
Ken McLeod and Mal Vickers are active campaigners against mispractice in alt med areas. They are both past winners of the Skeptic of the Year award.