



Seeking Clarity: Delivering outcomes-based care

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Dr. David Fletcher is an original wellness practitioner. Families, individuals, corporations and audiences around the world listen and learn from Dr. Fletcher about their innate ability to achieve new and exciting ways to express their potential. Besides being an active community practitioner, Dr. Fletcher owns and runs CLA, a chiropractic technology company that offers leading edge analysis on the effects of stress and lifestyle choices on the nervous system. This technology is embraced by chiropractic wellness doctors, professional sport teams, and research facilities around the world, while being recognized by the Space Foundation as a significant addition to the space program. Dr. Fletcher is an unwavering advocate for change towards the wellness lifestyle.

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Published by: Chiropractic Leadership Alliance
Taggart Building, 32895 Coastal Hwy., Bethany Beach, DE 19930

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If you were to wander through the halls of a chiropractic college and attend seminars or listen in on a webinar, you would be struck by the enthusiasm and the certainty of the students and practitioners. Not quite bravado, but a certain confidence that goes with being called by purpose. However, if you were to step away from this environment and watch the same chiropractors in their community practices, you might see a different picture. The confidence seems to weaken and the uniqueness of the chiropractic story begins to shift. The boldness of innate healing gets softened to become something pedestrian that can be duplicated by any number of other qualified health providers. What could cause this evaporation into mediocrity?

The answer lies in quantifiable outcomes. As practitioners, we have all felt and seen the power of an adjustment as it arouses a response that only an adjustment can do. There is nothing quite like observing the shift as a person unlocks years of confusing tension from the spine and nervous system. Being a part of the transformation of a patient's health and their wellness belief systems is the "juice" that keeps us engaged. But, as powerful as that event can be, the real healing and transformation comes when there is a commitment to progressive change. Keeping the patient, and indeed the practitioner, engaged and focused on the real outcome is an enormous undertaking. This of course means that there must be a crystal clear understanding and plan as to what that outcome could and should be. Sadly, because the illusion of wellness is so far reaching and nebulous, that message is difficult to attain. On the other side of the equation, functional and structural improvements are imminently measurable as are pain and symptom outcomes. But these outcomes leave so much on the table for a chiropractor. Having an improved spinal or peripheral joint system is only a small component in the wellness continuum. **What's needed is a unified approach where structure, function, and continuous adaptability are gathered together and a quantifiable measurement can be attained to benchmark where and how a patient is positioned in their wellness.**

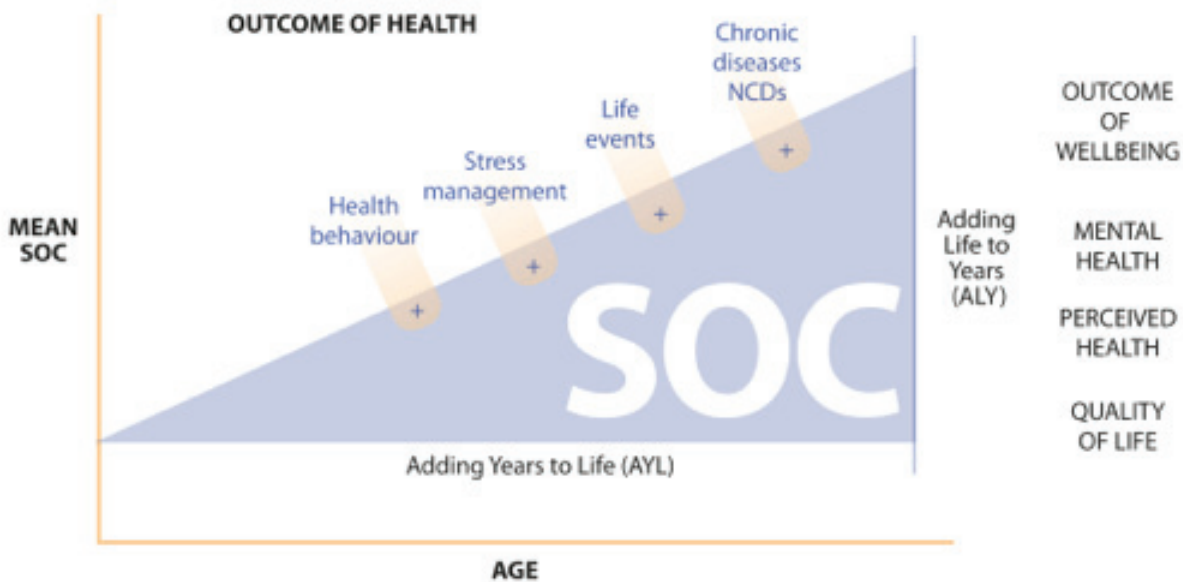


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A concept that has floated around since the 70's may provide a rallying point of view. Salutogenesis is a hybrid of the Latin, salus = health and the Greek genesis = origin (Antonovsky). It is a term used to contrast the evolution of disease known as pathogenesis. Anton Antonovsky, a professor of medical sociology, recognized that although stress is universal to all humans in their experiential quotidian, each person has an individualized response. To some, an event or action is merely part of life, while to others it can be seen as distress. This “coping capacity” is a result of the nature and nurture interplay. **If salutogenesis refers to “how people manage stress and stay well,” then the ability to reduce the chronic stress within our bodies and lives is only one half of the equation.** The other side of that equation is to consider what is needed to enhance or arouse opportunities to explore one's potential.

It can be agreed that the central nervous system is the master system within the body. All of the body's functions along with its sentient and emotional make-up are under the guidance of the CNS, first and foremost. This means that every action, movement, emotion, dream, or organ function is mediated by the CNS. Chiropractic has embraced this tenet as the centerpiece of its unique stance. **The classic triad of chiropractic's art, science, and philosophy rests upon the foundation of three central principles. The body is self-regulating, the body is self-repairing, and finally, all experiences and functions including regulation and repair are under the guidance of the nervous system.**



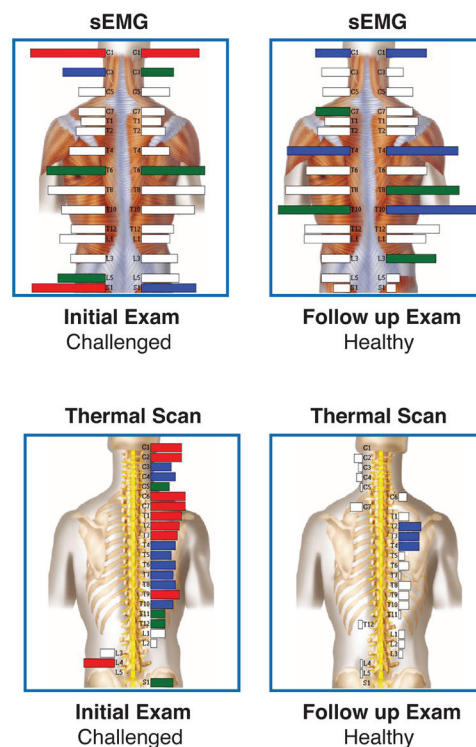
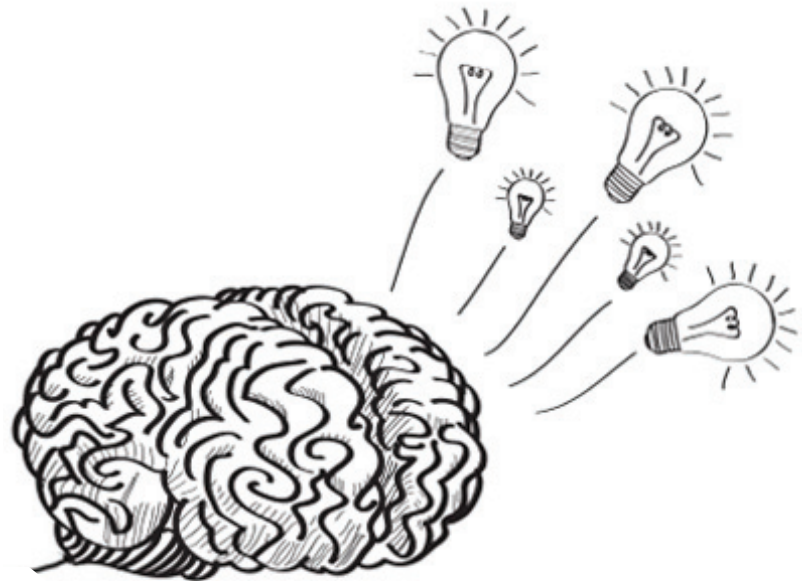
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Again, simply put, we live our lives within the boundaries of the nervous system's ability to interpret our environment and react. It can then be assumed that the healthier and more responsive the nervous system is, the greater opportunity a person has to be alert and alive.

When you blend the notion of stress and coping with the primacy of the CNS, salutogenesis can be seen as a concept which matches the essence of chiropractic. As practitioners, we are all aware that stress affects the function of the nervous system (Ziegler, Ruiz-Ramon, Shapiro). Quantifiably, there are many tests that determine exactly which part of the functional nervous system is under the effect of distress. Incliniometry gives a measurement of the relationship between position and motion. Pressure algometry provides a localized window to the sensitivity of an area. Electromyography can determine the energy expenditures in supportive muscles when tasks are performed. Therefore, an evidence-based approach can be developed with the goal of addressing salutogenesis through a purely chiropractic approach. Of the three divisions of the CNS, the autonomic system is flagged as being involved in all aspects of inflammation and disease (Black). This means that a diminished coping capacity can be correlated with diminished autonomic activity. If one could safely and accurately observe autonomic activity and benchmark it against patient populations, then the notion of salutogenesis would have a clinical face. If it was then determined that chiropractic care could trigger and continuously improve the autonomic activity, then there would be an unmistakable link between chiropractic care and well-being.



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For years, instrumentation has been used within the chiropractic profession to identify stressful consequences in a variety of tissues. Most efforts and research have been aimed at the effects of distress on the tissues of the musculo-skeletal complex. As such, chiropractors are revered as spinal care mavens. But, salutogenesis does not stop with the well-being of the spine. It is person focused. Identifying the relationship between performance, illness, and autonomic balance has been quantified extensively with the use of Heart Rate Variability (HRV) (Kautzner). Everything from states of cardiac disease to ADHD or sports performance has



been viewed through the lens of HRV (*O'Brien, O'Hare, Corral*), (*Dixon, Kamath, McCartney, Fallen*). Recently, studies linking chiropractic care to successful increases in autonomic activity and balance was published (*Zhang, Dean, nosco, Strathopulous, Floros*), (*Zhang*). Not surprisingly, these studies indicated that a course of chiropractic adjustments positively affected the outcomes. With this data alone, **chiropractors should feel confident to recommend care that can perhaps exceed symptom management and track continual improvements in the state of a person's well-being using HRV.** To be limited to caring for a part of a person is to deny the rationale of chiropractic being a distinct member of the healing arts community.

Recommending a course of care can now be logically balanced between the immediacy of symptom-based care, restorative, functional care, and finally salutogenesis. Wellness is a common descriptor of the emergent state of potentiating one's perfection. Chiropractic has the inside track on being the honest broker of an ascendant form of wellness. Adaptability is what allows coping to be present. Enhanced acuity of the autonomic nervous system, coupled with improvements in neuro-muscular tone set the stage for the widening of the gap between the earlier descriptor of wellness, then referred to as "ease" contrasted with the disturbed state of health, coined by chiropractors as, "dis-ease".

Using evidence-based technologies applied through a chiropractic model positions our profession as leaders within a society willing to embrace wellness. Perhaps salutogenesis is a difficult term to discuss with patients, but to chiropractic practitioners it describes the uniqueness of everything chiropractic. Linking stress, coping and adaptation with the power of a chiropractic adjustment as it releases neural tension is a powerful model. Plotting a course of care that is accountable to neural performance opens the door to new and exciting levels of certainty. Perhaps the swagger of this certainty can replace the doubt that resides in so many of our colleagues outside of schools, seminars, or webinars.

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