

The History of Chiropractic

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The understanding that the spine is somehow involved in health and wellness, as well as the practice of using manual manipulation as a source of healing, dates back thousands of years, to the time of the ancient Greek philosophers. In fact, Hippocrates once said, "Get knowledge of the spine, for this is the requisite for many diseases."

The First Chiropractic Adjustment

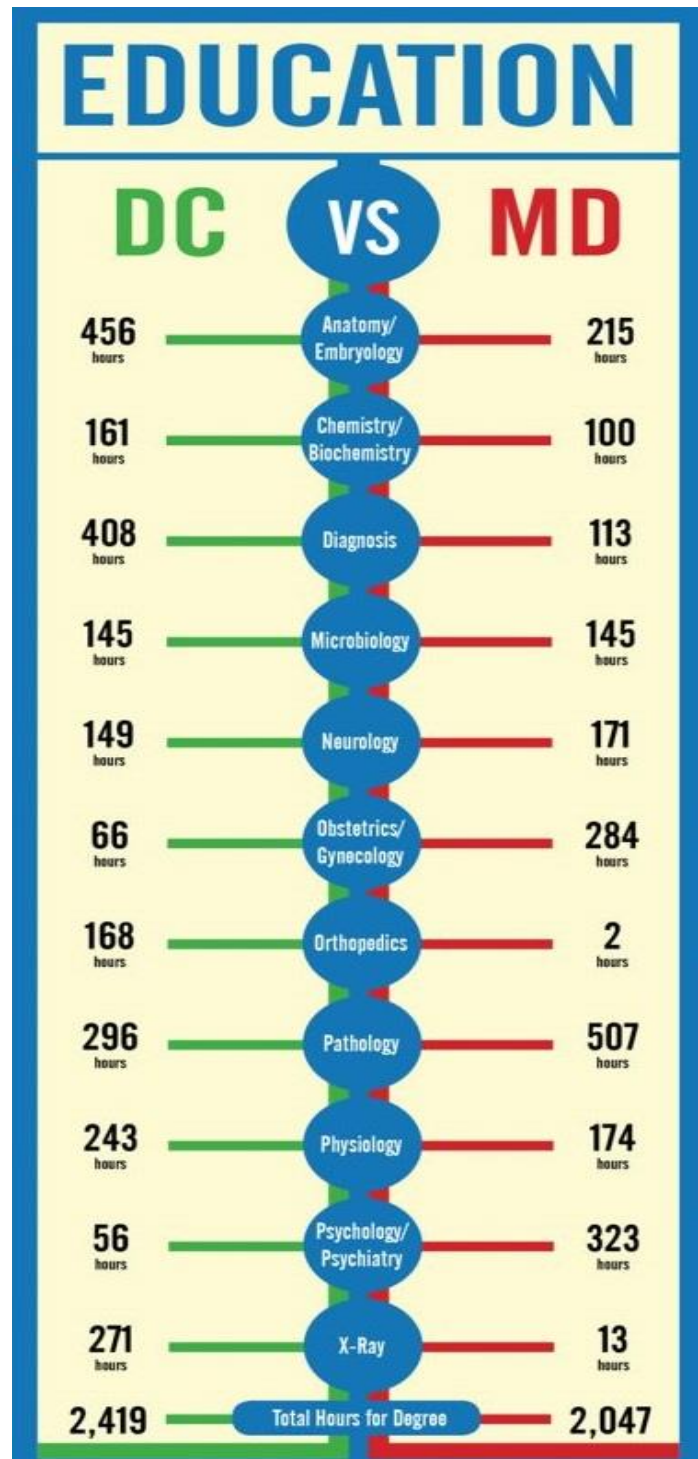
The modern method of treatment that chiropractors now practice was developed in the United States beginning in 1895.

The word Chiropractic comes from the Greek words *cheir* (meaning 'hand') and *praktos* (meaning 'done'), i.e. "Done by Hand." The name was chosen by Daniel David Palmer, a self-educated teacher and healer who performed the first spinal manipulation on a patient.

That patient was Harvey Lillard, a janitor who worked in Palmer's building. Lillard was nearly totally deaf and mentioned to Palmer that he had lost his hearing many years before when he was bending over and felt a "pop" in his upper back.

Palmer, who was a practitioner of magnet therapy (a common therapy of the time) was quite knowledgeable in anatomy and very interested in how the spine interacts with the rest of the body's systems. He felt strongly that the two events—the "popping" in Lillard's back and his deafness—must somehow be related.

He examined Lillard's spine and found a problem with one of his vertebra. Palmer adjusted Lillard's vertebra and an amazing event occurred—Lillard's hearing was restored! Today, this procedure is known as a chiropractic adjustment.



Palmer soon discovered that chiropractic adjustments could relieve patients' pain and other symptoms. These misalignments in the vertebrae are called subluxations.

He began to use these adjustments to treat a variety of ailments, including sciatica, migraine headaches, stomach complaints, epilepsy, and heart trouble. In 1898, he opened the Palmer School & Infirmary of Chiropractic (now known as Palmer College of Chiropractic) in Davenport, Iowa, and began teaching his chiropractic techniques to others.

Initial Resistance in the Medical Community

The medical community did not immediately embrace Palmer's chiropractic theories and techniques. They called him a "quack" and refused to acknowledge his accomplishments. At one point, Palmer was even indicted for practicing medicine without a license and spent time in jail for his offense.

Research has shown that Palmer was not the ignorant fish monger that some in the medical profession claim. An investigation of his library, which he quoted liberally in his letters, showed that he was up to date in his knowledge at the turn of the 20th century. Of course, his theories, in the light of 21st century knowledge, look uneducated.

Chiropractic Today

Today, chiropractors receive as much medical education as medical doctors, and are licensed in all the U.S. states, Canadian provinces, most European countries, Australia and New Zealand.

There are more than 50,000 practicing chiropractors in the U.S. alone. Despite its North American roots, there are now more chiropractic educational programs outside of North America.

Chiropractic continues to gain wide acceptance by the medical, legal, and patient communities through its record of beneficial results and ongoing research.