

## Introduction

Chiropractors are not all the same: the profession suffers a self-anointed research elite as a small, unproductive but provocative minority.

On the other hand conventional chiropractors, about 100,000, each help around 150 people a week in over 90 countries globally.<sup>1</sup> And there are academic chiropractors who usually maintain their clinical skills in limited hours private practice. But who would really know as they rarely write or publish.

In this video I'll give you the evidence on the distribution of the profession.

[INTRO CLIP]

This video is the first of five in which I describe the profession of chiropractic and I begin with comments on the distribution of its practitioners. I have given what I think chiropractic is in my Welcome video. Here my main two papers of reference are my report of the conventional identity of chiropractic,<sup>2</sup> and my history of how the profession has two elements,<sup>3</sup> one based on Palmerian concepts and one that is largely imagined. These papers are linked in the transcript on the webpage.

Let's address the second idea first in which I propose that the college of graduation is a variable that determines a graduate's point of view.

I argue that this school of thought is either aligned with the European bonesetters which gave rise to osteopathy and self-limits chiropractic to a means of providing pain relief, or it is aligned with Palmer's discoveries which expands chiropractic to a limited form of health care where well-being and health are more than an absence of pain.

Using Australia as a case study<sup>3</sup> I have shown that one stream developed from an education based, first-hand experience in chiropractic science, art and philosophy, and another which adopted the name '*chiropractic*' based on the statements of a naturopath FG

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1. Data sourced from the WFC home page at URL [wfc.org](http://wfc.org) and verified by personal email 24 June 2018: Richard Brown, Secretary-General, World Federation of Chiropractic.
  2. Ebrall P. The conventional identity of chiropractic and its negative skew. J Contemp Chiropr. 2020;3(1):111-26. URL <https://journal.parker.edu/index.php/jcc/article/view/133>
  3. Ebrall PS. Chiropr Hist. Finding the professional identity of chiropractic in Australasia: A pragmatic narrative of the Formative Period to 1960. Chiropractic History. 2020;40(1):49-71.

Roberts and other self-promoters. These pretenders decided to add chiropractic diplomas to their part-time teachings of naturopathy and osteopathy. They believed they were chiropractors and capable of getting the same positive results that Palmer-trained chiropractors were achieving.

The next step for this second stream was to claim legitimacy in the name of science and we see some colleges frame themselves as being more scientific than others, such as the Anglo-European School<sup>4</sup> and the Canadian Memorial College,<sup>5</sup> while the more successful colleges seem to follow the Palmer model such Palmer University<sup>6</sup> itself, and for example the New Zealand,<sup>7</sup> Barcelona,<sup>8</sup> and the Australian<sup>9</sup> colleges of chiropractic.

Having spent my 30-year career as an academic within the university system, I can categorically express that state-run universities are very weak, if not totally inappropriate institutions to host a chiropractic program. Again Australia gives us the example of RMIT, Murdoch, Macquarie and CQUniversity where chiropractic programs have become just one income-generating stream among many in a dispassionate institution that is only delivering education for the income it generates. It is beyond belief to see the *British Chiropractic Association*<sup>10</sup> following suit and only developing programs within the university model.

Now we need to look at the known distribution of, if you like 'these schools of thought' in chiropractic. The evidence points to a distribution that is negatively skewed, that is with a tail to the left that fades to insignificance.

It is wrong to think the left-tail represents a 'left wing' of the profession and that the majority are right-wing. Seaman found no evidence to support this polarity.<sup>11</sup> The tail is a statistical outcome and always lies to the left when the mean is less than the median. It is seen in this case because of estimates rather than actual measurement, with the estimates taken from reports of multiple surveys.

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4. Anglo-European School of Chiropractic. Home. URL <https://www.aecc.ac.uk/schools/chiropractic/>

5. Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College. Home. URL <https://www.cmcc.ca>

6. Palmer University. home. URL <https://www.palmer.edu>

7. New Zealand College of Chiropractic. Home. URL <http://chiropractic.ac.nz>

8. Barcelona Chiropractic College. Home. URL <https://bcchiropractic.es/en/>

9. Australian Chiropractic College. Home. URL <https://acc.sa.edu.au>

10. British chiropractic association. Train to become a chiropractor. 'To be a chiropractor you will need a chiropractic degree ...five universities [are] currently offering courses.']. URL <https://chiropractic-uk.co.uk/become-a-chiropractor/>

11. Seaman DR. Who are the left-wing and right-wing chiropractors? *The American Chiropractor*. 1996;May/June:20.

I call the majority, around 80% of the profession, which represents the mode, as 'conventional', meaning they are chiropractors who accept the idea of subluxation and see patient after patient who report improvements in their health and well-being well after any matter of pain has been resolved.

This is an acceptance of chiropractic as it was founded by DD Palmer interpreted through a lens of both one's experienced clinical science, and one's educated science.

The tail, which fades to nothing, accounts for no more than 20% of the profession, in fact the extreme left of the tail is probably no more than a hundred or so chiropractors who vocally deny subluxation as dismiss it as dogma. Australia's Keith Charlton is one who has published on the topic.<sup>12, 13</sup> Charlton held for some 20 years the idea that chiropractic's prime tenet was merely a dogma and shared that view with the late Joe Keating.<sup>14</sup>

Essentially, Keating's idea of chiropractic dogma has 3 parts:

- ▶ that chiropractic works, the idea that there is an association between subluxation and health status;
- ▶ that subluxation is the cause of all or most disease; and that
- ▶ Innate Intelligence or, as Keating wrote '*weaker forms of vitalism*' is responsible for healing. This is the idea that the power that made the body heals the body.

Another Australian chiropractor John Reggars, claimed that '*The abandonment, by some groups, of a scientific and evidenced based approach to practice for one founded on ideological dogma is beginning to take its toll.*'<sup>15</sup>

By writing these words Reggars has attempted to show himself as being scientific in his practice and he may well be so, however I have shown<sup>16</sup> his inference that he is with the majority to be wrong. Reggars could be considered to be at the extreme end of the negatively skewed distribution tail, completely removed from the reality of philosophy-based practice.

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12. Charlton KH, Grod JP, Keating Jr JC, et al. Subluxation: Dogma or science? *Chiropr & Osteopat.* 2005;13(1). URL <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1208927/>.

13. Charlton KH. Essay: Data and dogma: The use and abuse of information. *J Aust Chiropr Assoc.* 1987;17(2):46-8.

14. Keating JC Jr. Commentary: The specter of dogma. *J Can Chiropractic Assoc* 2001;45(2):76-80. URL <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2505040/>.

15. Reggars JW. Chiropractic at the crossroads or are we just going around in circles? *Chiropr Man Ther.* 2011;19:<http://chiromt.com/content/19/1/11/abstract>.

16. Ebrall P, Murakami Y. A Critical analysis of the Reality Distortion of chiropractic among scientists with constructive criticism of the current debate. *J. Phil Princ Prac Chiropr* 2019;July 11:1-11. <https://www.vertebralesubluxationresearch.com/2019/07/10/a-critical-analysis-of-the-reality-distortion-of-chiropractic-among-scientists-with-constructive-criticism-of-the-current-debate/>

Given Keating dumped on vitalism, I shall leave the last word to an expert in the area, yet another Australian chiropractor who has held prominent political positions as President of the Australian peak body, and also of the World Federation of Chiropractic. I speak of Dennis Richards who undertook doctoral research<sup>17</sup> and earned his PhD<sup>18</sup> on the topic of vitalism. I urge you to follow the links in the transcript and on the website and have a look at the thesis which earned him a PhD from a reputable Australian university.

Richards, who is one of the few chiropractors whom I consider to be a *Philosopher of Chiropractic*, concluded 'A majority of participants believed that chiropractic thinking and practices based on vitalism could offer great value in addressing the prevalence of non-communicable lifestyle related conditions. To address this prevalence, the majority proposed a vitalistic practice model composed of chiropractic adjustive care and healthy lifestyle advice. A minority proposed a non-vitalistic practice model of manipulative therapy for the treatment of musculoskeletal pain.'

Dennis' 'majority' is my 80% who are conventional chiropractors, and his 'minority' are my negatively skewed tail to statistical insignificance, the therapists and mechanists who blight the profession as the pain-based handful who resolutely refuse to admit there is more to chiropractic than just banging on backs in workers' compensation schemes where one is paid regardless of the outcomes.

There is no better evidence of this group's ignorance of chiropractic than their sad little paper called '*Unhappy families*'.<sup>19</sup>

The less said about this exceptionally poor piece of writing, the better.

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17. Richards DM. The meaning and value of vitalism in chiropractic [Thesis]. Asia-Pac Chiropr J. 2021;1.3. URL <https://apcj.rocketsparkau.com/richards--mc-vitalism/>

18. Richards DM. The meaning and value of vitalism in chiropractic [Thesis]. Southern Cross University. URL [https://researchportal.scu.edu.au/esploro/outputs/doctoral/The-meaning-and-value-of-vitalism/991012904700402368?institution=61SCU\\_INST](https://researchportal.scu.edu.au/esploro/outputs/doctoral/The-meaning-and-value-of-vitalism/991012904700402368?institution=61SCU_INST)

19. Leboeuf-Yde C, Innes SI Young KJ, Kawchuk GN, Hartvigsen J. Chiropractic, one big unhappy family: better together or apart? Chiropr Man Ther. 2019;27:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12998-018-0221-z>

This video is indexed at ebrall.com as '01-1 Distribution'

**Indexing terms:** second stream; Anglo-European College of Chiropractic; Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College; Palmer University; Barcelona College of Chiropractic; New Zealand College of Chiropractic; Australian College of Chiropractic; RMIT University; Murdoch University; Macquarie University; CQUniversity; British Chiropractic Association; David Seaman; Keith Charlton; Joe Keating; John Reggars; Dennis Richards.

**Fig: Left-skewed distribution of chiropractic identity**

