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Media Alert: Tuesday 23 April 2024

Combatting Australia's Back Pain Epidemic: National Spinal Health Week Champions a Healthier Future for Australia's 6.1million Back Pain Sufferers

Spinal Health Week 20 – 26 May 2024

With more than 6.1 million Australians suffering from debilitating back pain, **National Spinal Health Week (20-26 May 2024)**, an initiative of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA), is dedicated to improving the spinal health of all Australians through increasing awareness of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) including Low Back Pain (LBP) which currently costs the Australian economy over \$55.1 billion annually.

Four in every five Australians experience back pain at some point in their lives, usually as a result of MSDs which account for the greatest proportion of persistent pain conditions and the second largest contributor to disability worldwide; with low back pain the single leading cause of disability globally in both men and women.

According to the new *World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline for non-surgical management of chronic primary low back pain in adults in primary and community care settings (Dec 2023)*, LBP is a very common condition which the WHO has labelled a global public health issue.

In 2020, approximately one in 13 people globally experienced LBP, equating to an estimated 619 million people - a 60% increase since 1990, with cases of LBP expected to rise to an estimated 843 million by 2050.

The guideline written by a world-wide range of leading musculoskeletal health practitioners provides evidence-based recommendations on holistic non-surgical interventions including chiropractic treatments.

Dr David Cahill, President of the ACA, welcomed the WHO's first guideline aimed at addressing LBP and chronic LBP in adults, including older people, with results from the in-depth global research recommending non-surgical interventions be a fully integrated, drug-free, person-centred approach; such as chiropractic healthcare, to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for LBP sufferers.

"With its findings focussed on individualised holistic healthcare, the WHO's research aligns with the heart of ACA's chiropractic philosophy - that patient education and self-care strategies, tailored exercise programs and physical therapies including chiropractic spinal manipulative therapy, and massage; can provide effective, evidence-based holistic drug-free solutions for back pain sufferers," he said.

"And although the WHO research determined that in some cases, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications may assist sufferers in some instances in the short-term; in line with the University of Sydney's study (*Lancet medical journal, 23 June 2023*), the WHO recommends against the commonly prescribed use of opioids and paracetamol to treat LBP as these medications have proven largely ineffective and come with a range of significant associated risks and side effects," Dr Cahill said.

For about 8 in 10 sufferers who experience persistent symptoms beyond three months, the pain is often not caused by any particular condition. Known as 'Chronic Primary Low Back Pain' (CPLBP) or non-specific low back pain, it is classified as a non-sinister, non-pathological cause with over 90% of back pain due to CPLBP.

"For people who experience chronic back pain, their ability to participate in family, social, and work activities is often limited leading to negative impacts on both physical and mental health with significant costs to families, communities and Australia's economy," Dr Cahill said.

Of the millions of Australians already impacted by MSDs including LBP, 58% are of working age in their peak income earning years (25-64), with physical workers the highest percentage of Australians at risk of back pain and injury.

With physical work typically involving strenuous activities that can strain the spine, muscles, ligaments and joints; lifting, repetitive actions such as bending, squatting or standing for extended periods can lead to musculoskeletal injuries which, if left untreated, can lead to a chronic pain condition or disability.

Older Australians are also at high-risk, particularly those over 65 years as they're more likely to develop chronic LBP which can restrict activities and limit their overall enjoyment of life with devastating consequences including loss of physical and mental capacity and restricted mobility which limits participation in society with psychosocial impacts.

Inactive Australians who don't exercise and spend long hours sitting at work or at home are also at risk of developing poor posture, weight gain and a range of associated musculoskeletal problems that can impact their quality of life and overall health and wellbeing.

With the annual cost of MSDs to the Australian economy exceeding \$55.1 billion through direct health costs, lost productivity and reduced quality of life; and with the growth in musculoskeletal cases projected to be 43% over the next two decades (including older Australians living with spinal health conditions); the health burden on Australians and our economy is and will continue to be significant," Dr Cahill said.

As a leader in musculoskeletal health, ACA has invested over \$2.2 million to advance research in building evidence-based practice for chiropractic healthcare and promotes the importance of maintaining spinal health through its annual flagship campaign, **National Spinal Health Week** - Australia's longest running (over 25 years) and award-winning health awareness campaign dedicated to improving the spinal health of Australians of all ages.

"When it comes to treating most back pain, best practice starts by avoiding prescribed and over-the counter medications and instead, accessing person-centred, low risk, non-surgical, drug-free therapies that can treat the underlying cause not just the symptoms while providing self-care preventative measures essential in delivering holistic patient care," Dr Cahill said.

"Every week 400,000 chiropractic healthcare consultations are helping to create well-adjusted Australians. With so many seeking holistic chiropractic healthcare every week, ACA chiropractors continue to play an important role in improving the spinal health of everyday Australians," said Dr Cahill.

To download a free ACA Back Pain Factsheet, visit spinalhealthweek.org.au.

#SpinalHealthWeek #ConsultAChiro #LowerBackPain #BackPainConsultAChiro #BackPain

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INTERVIEW REQUESTS

A variety of spokespersons including case studies are available for interview via Insight Communications **02 9518 4744**



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For information about national **Spinal Health Week 2024**, contact ACA **02 8844 0400** or visit spinalhealthweek.org.au.

MEDIA CENTRE - SPINAL HEALTH WEEK 2024: <https://bit.ly/SHW-24>

CAMPAIGN LAUNCH - SUNDAY 19 MAY 2023

ACA set to release new data on the impact of back pain in Australian

In launching Spinal Health Week on Sunday 19 May 2024, the ACA will release new findings obtained from an independent national survey demonstrating the impact back pain has on Australian sufferers and the importance of spinal health for everybody.

ACA MEDIA SPOKESPERSONS - NATIONAL & ALL STATES & TERRITORIES

Note: Case studies are also available upon request.

Dr David Cahill – President, Australian Chiropractors Association - National, NSW & Victoria

ACA President, Dr David Cahill has been a registered, practicing chiropractor since 1991, in the Malvern East area since 1998. He loves helping people of all ages, from newborn babies and toddlers, to those in their more senior years. David has always been very active in post-graduate education, continually upskilling in many aspects of chiropractic. Since 2016 David has been the chiropractor for the Hawthorn Football Club. He enjoys taking care of the elite footballers, integrating his chiropractic care in a team with the other support disciplines, particularly physiotherapy. David's passion is to truly help people have transformative experiences through chiropractic, and to better explore their magnificent potential.

Dr Damian Kristof – Vice President, Australian Chiropractors Association - National, NSW & Victoria

Nutritionist, Naturopath and Chiropractor, Dr Damian Kristof is a highly sought-after presenter and speaker in the Wellness industry. With over 20 years of experience, Damian's in-depth knowledge of the body, nervous system, food functions and responses coupled with his friendly and dynamic presenting style, has him in high demand. Focusing on food as key to unlocking optimal health and wellness, Damian presents in-depth facts and concepts that have never before been readily available to the public - offering all audiences from industry experts to the general public highly valuable content as he engages, educates and inspires audiences across the globe.

Dr Anthony Coxon – National & Victoria

Dr Anthony Coxon is a caring and respected chiropractor with 30 years' experience. In 2009, he completed Post Doctorate studies in Chiropractic Neurorehabilitation. This additional qualification gives Anthony skills in dealing with more complex cases, particularly patients that experience balance disorders and dizziness. He is the current Vice President of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA). In addition to running a busy practice, Anthony has also appeared on countless print, radio and television media spots including 'A Current Affair', 'Today Tonight', the 'Today Show' and the Evening news on all commercial television stations. Anthony sees daily how chiropractic care and a healthy lifestyle can bring vitality and wellbeing to his patients.

Dr Michelle Ronan - Victoria

Michelle has been a registered chiropractor since graduating from RMIT in 2005 and has practiced in the Albert Park area since 2010. Michelle's passion lies in helping people's bodies perform better to allow them to get more out of life, whether that be to enhance sports performance, rehabilitation of chronic conditions, during pregnancy or to support general health and wellbeing. Michelle loves helping people of all ages and stages of life on their health journey. Michelle previously sat on the Victorian branch of the CAA (now the Australian Chiropractors Association) and is currently completing a masters through RMIT.

Dr Kim Lie Jom – NSW

Dr Kim Lie Jom is a caring, dynamic and talented chiropractor with over 20 years' experience that has earned the respect and trust of his professional colleagues and patients alike. Kim's knowledge of chiropractic grew as did his interest within the profession. Paediatric chiropractic, sports chiropractic and the concept of wellness chiropractic are of particular interest to him. With three young children of his own he is very aware of how making healthy lifestyle choices from a young age will serve you later in life. He is passionate about chiropractic and feels that the profession has enormous health benefits to offer the community at large and his goal is to educate and adjust as many families as possible toward optimal health through natural chiropractic care.

Dr Billy Chow – South Australia

Dr Billy Chow graduated as a chiropractor from RMIT University in 1998. Since graduating he has had a varied and enriching career in private practice, on boards and in business. Dr Chow is passionate about educating and inspiring people to make better choices and to live happier and healthier lives. Dr Chow believes that being on the Spinal Research Board is an honour and allows him to give back to his profession through service and provides him an avenue to promote, fund and facilitate more research faster for the chiropractic profession.

Dr Ashley Dent – Tasmania

Dr Dent graduated from Macquarie University in Sydney in 2010 where he was awarded the Ed Devereaux Award for Services to the Student Body. He is active within the Australian Chiropractors Association at a state and national level chairing the public engagement committee and being a member of two other committees. He volunteers his time with St Vincent de Paul to bring chiropractic care to the homeless and vulnerable in Hobart. Dr Dent has a keen passion for helping people improve their long standing (chronic) back and neck pain and then progressing their spinal health through exercise and rehabilitation so that they are stronger and healthier than they've ever been.

Dr Adam Smith – Queensland

Dr Adam Smith (Chiropractor) has nearly 20 years' experience in family based chiropractic care. He has experience working in many communities around Australia and internationally, including regularly serving on committees that guide health policy on a state and Australian federal level, as well as in the UK.

With a special interest in family health and wellness, Dr Adam works with local community groups, charities, workplaces and schools to improve access to chiropractic care for those who want it. He believes that all Australians should have access to quality chiropractic services, so he is currently working with a group that is expanding chiropractic access in regional and rural areas of Australia across six states and territories.

Dr Joshua Tymms – Western Australia

Dr Joshua Tymms discovered chiropractic as a child and has been fascinated with its application ever since. He graduated from Murdoch University with a Double Degree in 2006 and is registered as a chiropractor. He finished his International Chiropractic Sports Science Diploma in 2007 and has worked at many international level sports events. He is studying a double masters in public health and business administration to help build skills in these areas.

Dr Ali Young – Western Australia

Dr Ali Young is a Chiropractor with over 20 years' experience working specifically with families, children and women. She has owned practices & worked in both Western Australia and Queensland, and loves taking care of those children that love that extra jolt of frivolity, playfulness and joy in their healthcare. She is an advocate for Working Mothers, with her book, *Work. Mama. Life* widely received upon its publication in 2022. She is a mother of two, and now works with women in her Holistic Health Business space, combining these two great loves with her chiropractic work. She is a sought after speaker, MC, and strategist for working mothers in the allied health space who both own businesses, & want to live large whilst avoiding burnout. She has written for most major newspapers around Australia, has a podcast "Work Mama Life" with nearly 20,000 downloads, and provides support in the online space for women and mothers. She has been a chiropractic patient since 15 years of age, and thinks there is no greater gift than providing the support families need to allow their health to shine.

NATIONAL SPINAL HEALTH WEEK 2024

National Spinal Health Week (20-26 May 2024) is the initiative of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA). ACA has conducted national Spinal Health Week for more than 25 years. It is Australia's longest running, and award-winning national health awareness campaign dedicated to improving the spinal health of Australians of all ages.

Annually, the national campaign focusses on a specific spinal health issue while promoting the importance of maintaining good spinal health to improve overall health and wellbeing. In 2024, the campaign focusses on improving musculoskeletal health to address back pain and the impact it has on 4 in every 5 Australians.

With the cost of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) to the Australian economy exceeding \$55.1 billion annually (including direct health costs, lost productivity and reduced quality of life); with 6.1 million Australians already affected, of which 58% are of working age in peak income earning years (25-64); and, with the growth in musculoskeletal cases projected to be 43% over the next two decades (including older Australians living with spinal health conditions), the health burden on Australians and our economy is significant. By promoting a pro-active approach to improving spinal health through effective drug-free solutions, national Spinal Health Week 2024 will increase awareness of MSDs that can cause back pain and restrict the quality of life and increase the psychological distress and bodily pain of sufferers.

THE AUSTRALIAN CHIROPRACTORS ASSOCIATION

Established in 1938, the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) is the peak body representing chiropractors. The ACA promotes the importance of maintaining spinal health to improve musculoskeletal health through non-invasive, drug-free spinal health and lifestyle advice to help Australians of all ages lead and maintain healthy lives.

The ACA is the premier association for chiropractic in Australia. With around 3,000 members, the ACA is Australia's largest chiropractic health body and has taken a leadership role in promoting the importance of maintaining a healthy spine to improve the overall health and wellbeing of every Australian. ACA develops and promotes professional standards for chiropractors, has invested \$2.2 million to advance research in musculoskeletal health, builds evidence-based practice for chiropractic healthcare and actively promotes the importance of spinal health through its annual flagship campaign, national Spinal Health Week.

Every week 400,000 chiropractic healthcare consultations are creating well-adjusted Australians. With so many Australians visiting a chiropractor every week, chiropractors play an important role in improving the spinal health of everyday Australians.

REFERENCES

- **WHO guideline for non-surgical management of chronic primary low back pain in adults in primary and community care settings.** Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. <https://www.who.int/news/item/07-12-2023-who-releases-guidelines-on-chronic-low-back-pain#:~:text=LBP%20affects%20life%20quality%20and,accumulate%20less%20wealth%20for%20retirement.>
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