

Two million Italians treated by chiropractors

ROME - The little world of chiropractic is knocking at the door. Little being just a turn of phrase. Here in Italy, between one and a half and two million people annually turn to the technique of "vertebral adjustment", carried out using manual pressure, and without the use of drugs or surgery. A significant proportion of the five million patients using non-conventional therapies, homeopathy being the leading choice.

CORRIERE della SERA

Saturday , 06 April 2002

COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

Two million Italians treated by chiropractors From headaches to sciatica: their speciality is bone manipulation.

«It works well in 54% of cases»

The principle of this discipline: to restore the correct position and the freedom of movement lost, by rebalancing body structures and the connections between them. Headache, back and rib pain, neck, shoulder and arm problems, lumbago, low back pain, sciatica, pins and needles, injuries. These are the most common symptoms that cause us to suspect vertebral dysfunction, and lead the patient to the clinics of specialists in the "crunch" - the typical sound of bones being adjusted. This solution is not advisable, however, for those suffering from osteoporosis or rheumatism. EXCLUDED - Chiropractic remains outside the domain of the public health service, except for a very few contract centres. However, it would now seem that the proposed law for inclusion has a reasonable chance of moving forward, backed up by certain majority MPs, including Antonio Tomassini, president of the Senate Health Affairs Committee. Excluded practices have been waiting for someone to notice them since 1993. And now they're hoping that their time waiting in the hallway is over. "Italy is one of the few countries, together with Portugal, Greece and Spain, where it is considered an alternative therapy," laments Eddy Pellissier, president of the A.I.C. [Italian Association of Chiropractors], the association founded in 1974 to represent genuine chiropractors. THREE HUNDRED DOCTORS - Pellissier is one of the few Italian chiropractic doctors, 30 in all, complete with degree, working in our clinics. The other colleagues, about 270, are all foreigners, mostly Americans and Canadians, and are evenly distributed around the peninsula. This is the main problem of the profession, exercised in ancient times and rediscovered in 1895 in Davenport, Iowa, by Daniel Palmer. Our universities do not offer degree courses. Anyone who wants to do this job seriously has to study abroad. The alternative is to follow short courses which, however, do not provide the necessary preparation to produce good "bone adjusters". IMPOSTORS - According to the A.I.C., there are hundreds of impostors in circulation. Mostly doctors or physiotherapists who have attended schools "for three or four weekends". To finish up in their hands is not a good thing, judging by the data in an official report brought out in Great Britain on the incidence of errors (broken vertebra or ribs, arterial dissection amongst the worst, but also paralysis) occurring during manipulation. When treated by doctors of chiropractic, the risk is one in 8.5 million treatments. The percentage increases when the adjustments are carried out by "impostors", one case in a million. "The incidence level is low in any case, relative to the negative effects of drugs or surgery; total safety is impossible in any technique," points out Pellissier. The applications of this type of therapy will be under discussion until tomorrow at the world convention organised in Rome. A complete overview. From neonatal care to gynaecology to neurology. EFFECTIVENESS - In Italy 80% of patients turn to a chiropractor thanks to word of mouth, and only after the failure of other treatments. The other 20% are sent by dentists and family doctors. Also here in Italy, a fairly broad research survey has been carried out on the effectiveness of this therapy. A sample was taken of 17,000 patients with vertebral symptoms. In 54% of cases, the outcome was very favourable, with a 66% reduction in absences from work and hospitalisation. Margherita De Bac mdebac@corriere.it ROME - The little world of chiropractic is knocking at the door. Little being just a turn of phrase. Here in Italy, between one and a half and two million people annually turn to the technique of "vertebral adjustment", carried out using manual pressure, and without the use of drugs or surgery. A significant proportion of the five million patients using non-conventional therapies, homeopathy being the leading choice.