



# *Veterinary Orthopedic Manipulation*

## **Origins of Chiropractic**

Chiropractic as a profession is just over a hundred years old but various forms of spinal manipulation have been used by numerous cultures throughout history. Hippocrates used manipulative procedures to treat spinal displacements, and is credited with the phrase “Look to the spine for disease.” Similar procedures were performed by several American Indian tribes and appear in the records of ancient Asian and Egyptian cultures. Treatment by “bonesetters” became popular in England and America during the 1800s, but manipulation techniques weren’t systematized until the development of chiropractic and osteopathy in the late 1800s. Early chiropractors postulated that malpositioned vertebrae (termed subluxations) were responsible for disease by physically impeding normal nerve flow; these subluxations could be reduced back into place with a forceful thrust called an adjustment. Today, this anatomic model (pinched nerves) has been all but replaced by a functional model in which abnormal joint motion is the key, whether or not bones are displaced. Joints that don’t move well cause altered neural signaling from the joint’s motion sensors to the spinal cord, creating reflex patterns that contribute to pain, muscle guarding, and even dysfunction of the internal organs served by that spinal cord segment. This functionally defined subluxation is still treated with an adjustment, but one whose benefits are now understood to be the result of therapeutic stimulation of the joint’s motion sensors rather than the repositioning of bones. In this model, any actual malpositioning is likely the result of chronically altered neural reflex patterns rather than the cause.

## **The Adjustment**

The key element of chiropractic - the adjustment - is a High-Velocity (fast) Low-Amplitude (shallow) thrust causing separation and stretching of the joint, either along or at right angles to the plane of the joint surface. This HVLA thrust is different from other forms of spinal therapy, primarily in its speed (one of the most important motion sensors only responds to very fast movements) and in its precision (directing energy into a narrow field of focus). The adjustment was originally delivered by hand but over time hand-held instruments were developed, including the widely used Activator Adjusting Instrument (AAI) created for a human chiropractic technique called Activator Methods. A related method was developed for use in animals called Veterinary Orthopedic Manipulation (VOM), which uses the Activator to both locate (via reflex muscle twitches) and treat joint subluxations of the spine and limbs.

## **Treatments**

Veterinary Orthopedic Manipulation is typically performed at weekly intervals until improvement is seen, which may take one to five sessions, and then gradually reduced to the lowest necessary interval. Acute ailments tend to respond faster than chronic ones, requiring fewer total sessions. VOM is well tolerated by animals as the Activator thrust relies more on speed than force. On rare occasions a patient may feel temporarily worse, followed by recovery within a day or two. The benefits of VOM are enhanced by the addition of acupuncture, especially in the early stages of treatment.

Feel free to ask us for more information on VOM. We look forward to helping your furry friend!

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