

Evaluating the need for advancing chiropractic care practice in Nigeria

Abstract

Physiotherapy and chiropractic care are closely related, with benefits that can be jointly realised, as well as many distinctive benefits patients can derive from patronising either. It is necessary, however, to elaborate that patients will substantially benefit from physiotherapy through rehabilitative measures as part of the management and recovery from chronic medical conditions such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and post-operative surgical procedures, with the aim of improving mobility and postural education that ensures pain-free movement and recovery. A similar niche, yet distinctive in chiropractic care, focuses on relieving spinal, neck, back, headache, and joint-related pain through specialised non-invasive adjustments and manipulation techniques that help the body self-heal, while reducing inflammation and associated pain.¹ The two distinct fields of clinical care are essential in promoting holistic rehabilitative health options for patients, as evidenced by the training and licensure of qualified practitioners who administer these treatments within their respective domains. The objective of this article is to highlight the potential benefits of chiropractic care practice in Nigeria, where it is still in its developmental stage despite its clinical and societal benefits compared to its Physiotherapy counterpart. Conversely, Physiotherapy practice is fully established and well-integrated into the mainstream health care system.

Keywords: chiropractic care, physiotherapy, spinal adjustments, manipulation techniques

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Introduction

The state of chiropractic practice in Nigeria is still evolving, with many aspects of its growth and development remaining a subject of discussion. Understanding the nature, scope, benefits, and practical use may be the impetus needed to advance and practice it in Nigeria. Evaluating the health impact from the United States' standpoint, chiropractors have provided substantial health care interventions to the United States population, offering a variety of significant care that varied in the degree and intensity of use owing to the generalised awareness of its benefits.² Chiropractic care, in simple terms, can be understood as a form of alternative medicine that specialises in treating painful conditions associated with the spine, the knee and other joints.³

This arm of Medicine is regulated in Nigeria by the Medical Rehabilitation Therapists Board (MRTB) in conjunction with six other related disciplines. The board is tasked with the registration, training and licensure of practitioners in Nigeria. The board operates under the purview of the Ministry of Health following its establishment by Decree 38 of 1988/Acts M9 LFN 2004.⁴

A major force in advocacy for practice and advancement in Nigeria is the Association of Chiropractic and Osteopathic Practitioners of Nigeria (ACOPN), which may play a pivotal role in increasing public awareness and accelerating its growth.⁵

Discussion

Examining the limited landscape of practice in Nigeria, which is mainly in large cities such as Lagos and Abuja, with most practitioners obtaining their formal advanced training outside Nigeria.⁶ Currently, no degree-granting institutions provide formal training to support a critical approach to the direct transition from a structured academic setting to the established workforce. A fully accredited Doctor of chiropractic program at the University of Johannesburg and the Durban

University of Technology in South Africa are among the notable training facilities that produce the Chiropractic workforce on the African continent.⁷ Available chiropractic training is obtained through alternative pathways, such as the Nigerian Institute of Chiropractic Research and Development (NICRD), a subset of the Nigeria Society of Chiropractic Research and Development (NSCRD), through a four-semester training model.⁸ Physicians, paramedical and allied health professionals can obtain relevant chiropractic certifications that complement their practice.

Other challenges that hinder the growth of chiropractic care in Nigeria include low public awareness of the scope, benefits, and job prospects associated with the specialisation and practice on a national scale. The public perception is that of an alternative medicine that may only be considered as a last resort when conventional medical interventions are out of question. The lack of standardised, universal, and fully accredited university training in the country has contributed to this plight, as has limited integration into the national health care system.

Conclusion

The additional value of integrating chiropractic practice into the mainstream healthcare system in Nigeria cannot be overstated, as it offers a non-invasive, non-pharmacological, and cost-effective pain-relief option for many citizens. Some general practitioners viewed complementary and alternative medicine as an important unit to be considered when developing medical education curriculum.⁹ A multimodal pain therapy model instituted to manage back pain, integrating conventional medical treatment, complementary and alternative medicine, and mind-body medicine, produced a resounding outcome, culminating in an excellent, improved symmetrical gait pattern and reduced variability in stride measurements.¹⁰ Lastly, it is imperative to observe that the Medical Rehabilitation Therapists Board (MRTB) and the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN), which oversees the training and licensing of physicians,

work together to fashion a standardised and fully accredited line of academic career and training that is designed to produce qualified chiropractors that can be integrated into the healthcare delivery system. This will inadvertently improve the workforce and assist the citizens at large.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares there is no conflicts of interest.

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