West Hartford Group, Inc.

# West Hartford Group – Position Paper

TOPIC: Diagnostic Radiography* in Chiropractic Practice

## Introduction

Chiropractors diagnose and manage spine and musculoskeletal disorders, which may involve ordering and interpreting radiographs (x-ray studies). The West Hartford Group (WHG) recognizes the usefulness and importance of diagnostic radiography in evaluating some patients with spinal and musculoskeletal disorders and has developed, by consensus, the following positions with regard to diagnostic radiography. A list of relevant publications supporting these positions follows.

## Position

- It is appropriate for chiropractors to use diagnostic radiography in patients with clinical indications based on the best available scientific evidence.[1-4]

- Adverse health risks accompany many diagnostic procedures including diagnostic radiography.[5-10] The WHG supports and encourages the widely accepted principle of exposures to ionizing radiation that are "as low as reasonably achievable" (ALARA) and chiropractors must abide by all government laws, regulations and statutes pertaining to the safe use of ionizing radiation. When used appropriately, the small adverse health risks associated with radiography are significantly outweighed by the positive benefits.[11-21]

- The best available scientific evidence supports diagnostic radiography in patients with red flags that may indicate potentially serious and even life-threatening disorders.[22]

- It is inappropriate to use diagnostic radiography primarily for determining the need for manipulation/adjustment or posture analysis, either as a routine screening procedure, or as a routine serial or repeat procedure.[23]

- The use of 14" X 36" full-spine radiographs is appropriate for the evaluation of scoliosis and its progression according to indications based on the best available scientific evidence, but inappropriate when used primarily for determining the need for manipulation/adjustment or posture analysis.[24]

- It is unethical and inappropriate to advertise free or reduced-fee radiographs to actual or potential patients.

* This position paper refers only to the use of conventional diagnostic radiography (plain film radiographs), and does not address the use of advanced imaging methods such as CT, MRI, ultrasound or bone scan.

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