



National Health  
Promotion Program



Dr Linda Dade

# Kids are such fun

By Dr Linda Dade

I was doing my Chiropractic undergraduate degree when I first saw Paula Stacey present on Healthy Spines at a CAA Conference. I knew immediately that it was something I wanted to become involved with. My desire to become a chiropractor was driven by my greater desire to educate people (mostly women) that there were choices in healthcare for themselves and their families. I could not see a better way than becoming a Healthy Spines Team Member and, with the backing of the CAA and knowledge of the Department of Education, actually going into schools running this program.

Not only was the training program very valuable in preparing me for the classroom sessions but it taught me the value of feedback from any program I may undertake eg information evenings, as I now always ask participants to complete an evaluation form. The program brought everything back to basics so kids could understand it simply and this has reminded me to keep things simple every day in practice.

I have found that my personal profile has increased dramatically within my community. The teachers and the wider school community have all been impressed that this is a community service program run by the Chiropractors' Association of Australia and thank me for donating my time to help educate their children. Living in a small town, I continually bump into the children who are excited to tell their parents who I am.



Linda Dade and a Year 3 Tuncurry Primary School class who participated in the Healthy Spines program.

Most importantly, I believe educating young children about the value of the spine and the nervous system in a fun and safe environment is the key to change. If we keep doing what we have always done we will keep getting what we have always got! Empowered kids have a greater likelihood of becoming empowered, fully functioning adults who know they have choices not only with their health care but their 'life care'.

During the early years of our life we unconsciously acquire the behavioural repertoire needed to become functional members of society. How wonderful for children to learn at such a young age, and have locked away in their unconscious, the VITAL importance of the spine because it surrounds the nervous system which is connected to the brain and the brain is the boss – kids get that!

As neuroscientists emphasise, the conscious mind provides only 5% of the cognitive activity during the day, while 95 to 99% of our behaviour is directly derived from our subconscious. DD Palmer declared that life's vital functions were 'controlled' by Innate Intelligence which was under the guidance of an eternal Innate (spirit). Further, he referred to 'educated' as an 'intelligence' that is acquired through one's life experiences. Let's get our kids educated chiropractically.

Every one of the Healthy Spines Program Team Members has had a positive experience in spite of the amount of work required to effectively present this program. (I am sure it gets easier second time round.) Some uninvolved chiropractors I have spoken to have made the comment that they already do talks at schools and really don't see the need to do so in such a time consuming way. Having done both I sincerely disagree.

Doing talks at school is marketing you and your practice – it is not community service. Whereas, participating in the Healthy Spines Program is working to really educate children about the importance of their nervous system and how it is affected by the environments in which they live, play and work. You get to spend about five hours with each class over a period of six weeks, really interacting with them. Among other activities, the kids build spines, assess the spinal health safety of different

areas of their school, and then make up jingles and role plays to present back to their class on what they have learnt.

Based on my experience with two classes of Year 3 students at Tuncurry Primary School, they love it! It is such fun for them (and you) and they love you coming. This translates to a great big bunch of kids growing up who have already had a positive experience with a chiropractor. It may not mean another 20 new patient visits in your office this week – that is **not** what Healthy Spines is about. Did I get new patients as a result of the program? Yes, I did, but that was not why I did it and don't sign up if that is all that interests you.

The message is **much** bigger than that – it is about the importance of good spinal health and how children and schools can look after it. This is what happened in my school. I got emails from parents telling me what a positive experience it had been for their child, how their behaviour had changed for the better and they were consistently reinforcing the 'pipe cleaner' concept of the spine. I also got about 50 letters from the children thanking me for being the best, most wonderful spine teacher there ever was and being so happy about now knowing how important the spine is. The teachers reported that they enjoyed the program immensely and asked if the program could be run again next year for their next generation of Year 3 students. This is priceless and exactly the sort of outcomes we aim to achieve through Healthy Spines.



*Year 3 Tuncurry Primary students presenting a skit about how to wear backpacks.*

Healthy Spines has been such a positive and fun experience. I am looking forward to running this program again next year and the year after, and the year after that, and for as long as they will have me back!

For information on how to get involved in the Healthy Spines Program contact Leanne Jenkins at the CAA National Office: [projects@caa.asn.au](mailto:projects@caa.asn.au) or 02 4731 8011. More information on Healthy Spines is available at [www.healthyspines.com.au](http://www.healthyspines.com.au) where you can download copies of the 2005 Evaluation Report from the Healthy Spines Research section.