



Dr Mark Frochot

Strengthening focus on prevention and health promotion

By Dr Marc Frochot

In early 2007 when I decided to re-enter the chiropractic profession after a few years break, I came across a promotion on Healthy Spines. I made contact with Kathleen Stacey, the Healthy Spines National Program Consultant, and organised to attend the training.

Previously, when in practice in Cohuna, I visited the primary school that my daughter attended to introduce chiropractic to the students. After completing the training I realised that my previous school visits would not have had the same impact as the Healthy Spines Program.

The training takes two weekends involving 60 hours on understanding and evaluating health promotion, developing partnerships with communities (particularly schools), understanding language in terms of a wellness-focused program for children, developing skills for classroom presentation and plans for how to strengthen skills with the support of a Team Leader and the Program Consultant.

The program has given me the knowledge, skills and confidence to go into a school and present a very well researched presentation targeted to Year 3, 4 and 5 students. The program does more than teach children about their body, the spine and their nervous system. It increases school communities' (teachers and parents/guardians) understanding of the importance of spinal health care, develops a positive attitude towards spinal health care within the school community, and increases students knowledge of what they can do personally or in their environment to develop and maintain good spinal health.

It was a great experience and rewarding to see the changes happening with the children, and even the teachers. On one of my visits to the class, a teacher reported that as soon as I

walked in the children sat up straighter – hopefully both their memory of my visits and seeing the Healthy Spines program logo on the program posters in their class will help them do that more often! I came across one of the parents who said their child corrected the posture of all the family members at home. The teachers also followed through by regularly checking on the correct carrying of back packs.

Healthy Spines began in 2004 and was founded by the Chiropractors' Association of Australia as a community service initiative because they wanted to support programs that led to better health for all Australians. As the CAA wants to focus our profession on wellness care, it is a great opportunity to educate young children about their spine, posture and health, and the importance of having environments and policies that support spinal health. This is primary prevention – preventing the occurrence of disease rather than secondary prevention, which is early detection and intervention before the condition is clinically apparent.

Not only have I enjoyed presenting Healthy Spines last year, I am looking forward to running it again for the same school, as well as work in a second school this year. What I love about Healthy Spines is that it involves primary prevention, demonstrates professionalism in health promotion, and builds the credentials of our profession through the CAA's direct involvement. Not only is this a worthwhile program that needs support from our Association, it also needs support from our members to spread it further.

For information on how to get involved in the Healthy Spines Program contact Denise Nixon (nhq@caa.asn.au) at the CAA National Office or phone 02 4731 8011. More information on Healthy Spines is available at www.healthyspines.com.au where you can download copies of the 2007 Evaluation Report from the Healthy Spines Research section.