

# Essentials of Dermatology for Chiropractors



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# Dedication

## **Dr. Wiles**

This textbook is published and dedicated with love and deep appreciation to Noreen for her constant and unconditional support and encouragement for this project.

## **Dr. Williams**

This textbook is published in memory of Mary, who provided me the strength and encouragement throughout my professional career and especially during the years of her fight against cancer, which she succumbed to on July 15, 2005.

## **Dr. Ahmad**

This textbook is lovingly dedicated to my daughters Aalishba and Alaia, who have inspired me to complete this work and whom I wish to inspire as they begin their life-long journey of learning.

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# Preface

It has been said that chiropractors see more skin than any other health provider. This provides them with a perfect and unique opportunity to regularly evaluate the skin on a patient's face, neck, back and extremities. Chiropractors also spend a lot of their time observing the skin on their patients' backs, an area notorious for malignant melanomas and an area rarely seen by patients in the course of their daily routines. One of our first considerations for this textbook was the need to have a reliable source of information, written by chiropractors for chiropractors, regarding the early diagnosis of malignant skin lesions, particularly malignant melanoma. Currently available textbooks of dermatology are written for medical students or medical physicians. While these are usually excellent reference books, the fact is that they contain information about diagnostic tests chiropractors cannot perform and chiropractic students must sift through a specialist's level of material for basic screening, diagnostic, and therapeutic information. Furthermore, these texts rarely contain information about conservative or natural approaches to the treatment of skin disease and the maintenance of skin wellness. There has never been a textbook specifically written for chiropractors in the area of dermatology.

There is a worldwide emergence of interest in natural care and hygiene of the skin. Largely borne by a rising concern for environmental risk factors such as the increased exposure to ultraviolet light, we are seeing a demand for information concerning not only the prevention of skin cancer, but also regarding natural care of the skin. It wasn't long ago that we used to hear an old joke that dermatologists were the luckiest specialists since their patients never died and they never got better. This reflected the popular notion that most skin conditions were either incurable or required the continual use of either oral or topical corticosteroids. Certainly the science of dermatology has progressed as much as, or more than,

other areas of medicine over the last few decades, but the fact remains that many chronic skin problems defy permanent cure and there is a rising interest in natural approaches to these problems as well as natural health for the skin. A recent Google search of *psoriasis* yielded 23,600,000 citations. A search of *psoriasis natural care* resulted in 198,000 hits. While the percentage of internet references relating to natural care is less than 10% of the total references for this condition, one cannot deny that there are almost 200,000 references to natural approaches to care. This is what patients are seeing and reading on a daily basis and they are looking to their natural healthcare providers for information, clarification and support in their quest for solutions to their skin problems. Here is another interesting reflection of this rising interest in skin health: a Google search of *skin disease* yielded 4,970,000 hits but *skin health* yielded 9,060,000 hits, almost double the number. Lastly, *skin wellness* yielded 272,000 hits and *skin nutrition* yielded 747,000 hits. This is what patients want today—information and treatment that emphasizes natural approaches, nutrition, and skin health. All of these topics are included in our textbook.

Finally, the skin, along with hair and nails, can provide an important reflection of general health. Certainly many systemic conditions include skin manifestations or asymptomatic lesions and in fact, the skin may yield vital information suggesting serious systemic disease. As primary care or primary contact healthcare providers, chiropractors have a responsibility to determine a diagnosis prior to the delivery of care. Chiropractors must often rely on clinical diagnosis skills since they frequently do not have ready access to the expensive array of diagnostic tests that are typically available to physicians, or they do not have the skill or scope of practice to perform invasive testing. In that regard, chiropractors must be as either good or better at their clinical diagnosis skills than other physicians.



Chiropractors also need to be aware of the medical specialty of dermatology and its sub-specialty branches. Dermatology is a branch of medicine that deals with diagnosis and treatment of the pathological conditions of the skin, hair, and nails. Dermatologists are physicians who have undergone advanced training in dermatology at a recognized hospital and have fulfilled established professional requirements such as those prescribed by the American Board of Dermatology here in the United States. Its sub-specialties include:

- Venereology—specialization in the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Cosmetic dermatology—the branch of dermatology that deals with collagen and Botox injections, dermabrasion, chemical peeling, and nonabrasive laser treatments.
- Dermatologic surgery—scalpel surgery such as Mohs procedure for skin cancer, electro/cryosurgery, cosmetic surgeries such as face lifts, laser surgery, and photodynamic therapy.
- Dermatopathology—microscopic examination of skin biopsies and tissue samples.
- Pediatric dermatology—the branch that deals with diseases of the skin in children.

- Immunodermatology—the branch that views skin as an organ of immunity and is concerned with diseases such as psoriasis and vitiligo.

Dermatologists are busy specialists. It is important that chiropractors know when and when not to refer a patient to a dermatologist. Chiropractors must refer with confidence in order not to waste the valuable time of already busy dermatologists. At the same time, they need to be able to confidently pursue natural approaches to skin health, knowing that they have performed a competent assessment of the skin.

Our textbook provides this information and much more, specifically written for chiropractors and chiropractic students. We have designed this book to truly represent the essentials of dermatology for chiropractors and chiropractic students. Much of the material is presented in point form and there are numerous cross references between conditions and treatments. It is our hope that this textbook will form a common source of relevant dermatological information for our chiropractic college dermatology instructors, chiropractic students and practicing chiropractors.

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# Note to Readers: How to Use This Book

This book is designed to be an easy-to-use and practical reference source for both chiropractors and chiropractic students. Once you are able to describe the basic features of a particular skin lesion, you can classify it according to the information provided in Chapter 4, Pathophysiology of skin disease. From this classification and the information provided in Chapter 4, you should be able to determine a short list of possible diagnoses.

Each of the fifty most common skin conditions seen in a chiropractic practice are described in easy to read sections in Chapter 6. The common format describes the main features of the diseases or disorders and provides the essential information necessary to establish a diagnosis in most cases. The book is supplemented with more than 100 color images of the skin conditions described in the text, enabling visual recognition of the key dermatological elements of each disease.

Next, the various treatments, including natural remedies are described for each condition and cross-referenced to the formulary in Chapter 7. Additionally, in Chapter 7, each treatment modality or remedy is cross-referenced to the 50 conditions in Chapter 6 so that readers can become familiarized with dermatological diagnosis and treatment by either referencing treatments

from a given disorder, or disorders from a given treatment.

We believe that it is important for chiropractors to be a resource on wellness to their patients. More and more people are concerned about their skin as a reflection of their overall wellness. Chapter 2 provides a wealth of information about the health and wellness of skin and includes Patient Information Sheets that can be copied and given to patients.

For self-assessment, case studies and discussion questions are presented in Chapter 9 and selected response questions are provided in Chapter 10. These are also referenced to their source in the text.

Finally, for reference purposes, a supplemental list of 50 less common or less important skin conditions are described in Chapter 8. This second tier of skin disorders and diseases includes conditions less likely to be seen in a typical practice than those described in Chapter 6 (such as pseudoexanthoma elasticum), or those less likely to have clinical significance (such as lipoma). We felt that this chapter was important to complete the collection of conditions that might be considered essential for a chiropractor to be aware of, and further, we felt that it is not improbable that some of the more unusual conditions would be seen over the practice lifetime of many chiropractors.