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Neurologie Fonctionnelle : description et validité d'une approche thérapeutique controversée

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Neurologie Fonctionnelle : Description et validité d'une approche thérapeutique controversée

Thèse de doctorat de l'Université Paris-Saclay
Préparée à l'Université Paris-Sud

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Sciences du sport et du mouvement humain

Thèse présentée et soutenue à Orsay, le 7 février 2019, par

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LISTE DES ABREVIATIONS

ACNB : *American Chiropractic Neurology Board*

DACNB : *Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Neurology Board*

FNRE : *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*

IAFNR : *International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation*

MV : Manipulation vertébrale

NF : Neurologie Fonctionnelle

TDAH : Trouble du déficit de l'attention avec hyperactivité



I INTRODUCTION

La chiropraxie est une profession de la santé dont le champ de compétence fait l'objet d'une réglementation dans de nombreux pays où celle-ci est reconnue [1]. En France, les chiropracteurs sont autorisés à pratiquer des actes conservateurs, incluant la manipulation vertébrale (MV), ayant pour but de prévenir ou de remédier à des troubles de l'appareil locomoteur ainsi qu'à leurs conséquences, à l'exclusion des pathologies organiques qui nécessitent une intervention médicale ou chirurgicale [2].

Toutefois, en France comme dans d'autres pays, la profession apparaît composite [3-5], certains chiropracteurs proposant également de prendre en charge et/ou de prévenir des troubles non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques [6-8]. Cette offre alternative de soins est défendue par ses partisans de façons diverses, sur la base de 'techniques' chiropratiques aux théories elles aussi diverses. Cela pose des problèmes éthiques, ainsi que des problèmes d'identité [4, 5] et de perception de la profession [9, 10].

La Neurologie Fonctionnelle (NF), fondée à la fin des années 70 par Frederick Robert Carrick [11], chiropracteur, constitue un exemple actuel de cette offre alternative de soins en chiropraxie. A travers cette approche, il propose de prendre en charge avec succès des conditions de nature très variée, neuro-musculo-squelettiques et non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques (e.g. troubles neurodéveloppementaux, troubles neurodégénératifs, symptômes liés à des traumatismes crâniens) [12-14]. Malgré une théorie difficile à saisir, notamment du fait d'une littérature scientifique difficile d'accès, ainsi qu'un champ d'application prétendument large, la NF apparaît, a priori, comme une approche scientifiquement fondée [11].

En Australie, cette approche semble déjà bien insérée dans la pratique des chiropracteurs puisqu'une enquête récente indique que 13.3% des chiropracteurs interrogés y recourent [7]. En 2017, le *Carrick Institute*, institut de formation leader dans la diffusion de la NF, a proposé pour la première fois une série de séminaires de formation en France. Des séminaires de NF sont accessibles dans différents pays [15, 16] et sont proposés par plusieurs organismes privés [16-18]. Selon le site internet du *Carrick Institute*, 14000 praticiens y auraient déjà été formés [11]. La NF apparaît ainsi attractive.

En contraste avec cette attractivité et à d'apparents fondements scientifiques, la NF souffre de critiques vigoureuses ; celles-ci dénoncent notamment une absence de fondements scientifiques, la qualifiant de pseudoscience [19-21].



C'est dans ce cadre contrasté et dans un contexte où la chiropraxie reste, au moins en France, en quête de reconnaissance au sein du système de santé, qu'il nous a semblé pertinent de nous intéresser à la NF à travers un programme de recherche afin de tenter de statuer en faveur des apparences ou des critiques. En effet, la poursuite de la diffusion de cette approche au sein de la profession n'est souhaitable que si celle-ci est effectivement ancrée dans une démarche scientifique.

Le but de cette thèse est de contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de ce qu'est la NF, telle que fondée et diffusée par FR Carrick auprès des chiropracteurs, ainsi qu'à une meilleure connaissance des faits scientifiques pouvant sous-tendre cette approche, plus particulièrement dans un contexte chiropratique.



II CADRE THEORIQUE

A. La chiropraxie : définition légale et cadre réglementaire français

Préambule

La réglementation encadrant le métier de chiropracteur est variable d'un pays à un autre [1]. Pour ce travail de doctorat, seule la réglementation française sera décrite et servira de référentiel afin de situer la NF au sein de la profession chiropratique.

1. Définition légale du métier de chiropracteur et de son champ de compétence

En France, le métier de chiropracteur est défini par la loi comme suit : « Le chiropracteur effectue un diagnostic d'opportunité et positif, prévient et prend en charge les troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques de l'appareil locomoteur du corps humain ainsi que leurs conséquences, à l'exclusion des pathologies organiques qui nécessitent une intervention thérapeutique, médicale, chirurgicale, médicamenteuse ou par agents physiques. » [2].

La chiropraxie est considérée comme une profession de la santé et le chiropracteur est un praticien de première intention, ce qui lui confère une certaine autonomie mais aussi des responsabilités [2]. Ainsi, lorsque la situation clinique excède son champ de compétence légal, que les symptômes du patient persistent ou s'aggravent, celui-ci est tenu de référer le patient à un médecin [2]. De manière plus générale, dans l'intérêt du patient, le chiropracteur se doit de collaborer avec les autres professionnels de santé [2].

2. Les actes autorisés au chiropracteur

Toujours dans le cas de la législation française et dans le respect de son champ de compétence légal, le chiropracteur est autorisé à pratiquer des actes de manipulation et de mobilisation manuelles, instrumentales ou mécaniquement assistées. Ces actes sont souvent réalisés au niveau du rachis, et peuvent être complétés par des conseils ou des techniques non invasives, conservatrices et non médicamenteuses à visée antalgique [2].



3. La prise de décision clinique du chiropracteur selon la réglementation

La réglementation de la profession doit permettre de garantir la sécurité du patient. Après avoir établi un diagnostic dans son champ de compétence légal, la prise de décision clinique du chiropracteur doit être « guidée par l'addition de son expertise clinique, des valeurs et préférences du patient ainsi que les meilleures données scientifiques disponibles. » [2]. En d'autres termes, sa décision clinique doit être prise sur la base des principes déterminant une pratique fondée sur les preuves [2, 22].

Résumé à propos du cadre réglementaire du métier de chiropracteur en France

De ce cadre réglementaire français, nous pouvons retenir qu'un chiropracteur est habilité, après avoir posé un diagnostic dans son champ de compétence légal, à prendre en charge des troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques, et ce, à l'aide de techniques et de mesures thérapeutiques conservatrices, typiquement de manipulation ou mobilisation articulaires. Sa décision clinique est prise sur les bases constituant une pratique fondée sur les preuves.

B. La manipulation vertébrale

Préambule

La MV, aussi appelée ajustement vertébral par les chiropracteurs, est indissociable de l'histoire de la chiropraxie. A ce jour, elle reste le principal outil thérapeutique utilisé par les chiropracteurs [23]. Par ailleurs, la MV est également étroitement liée au développement de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle [11, 24, 25].

Ainsi, si au cours de ce travail de doctorat il n'a pas été question de directement contribuer à une meilleure compréhension des indications et des mécanismes d'action de la MV, il convient de faire un état des lieux des principales hypothèses et connaissances sur le sujet. Cela nous permettra par la suite de mieux appréhender ce que promet la NF.



1. Définition de la manipulation vertébrale

La MV est un mouvement passif forcé, dispensé sur une articulation, dont l'application de force est contrôlée, de haute vélocité et de faible amplitude [26, 27]. Au cours de ce type de geste les structures vertébrales et para-vertébrales subissent des déformations immédiatement réversibles [26, 28], il en résulte souvent un son de cavitation.

D'autres types de MV existent, notamment des techniques dites mécaniquement assistées ou instrumentalement assistées. Ces dernières sont également communément utilisées en chiropraxie. Quel que soit son type et la localisation à laquelle elle est dispensée, la manipulation a généralement pour but de restaurer la mobilité du segment articulaire concerné et de diminuer la douleur [26, 27, 29].

2. Les hypothèses à propos des mécanismes d'action de la manipulation vertébrale

Deux catégories principales d'hypothèses existent à propos des mécanismes d'action de la MV [29, 30]. D'une part la MV aurait une action biomécanique sur les structures vertébrales et para-vertébrales et, d'autre part, elle aurait une action neurophysiologique. Toutefois, il pourrait davantage s'agir d'une action combinée, biomécanique et neurophysiologique [29, 30]. Par ailleurs, des facteurs contextuels inhérents à tout traitement impliquant une relation patient-thérapeute devraient également être considérés [30-32].

2.1. Les hypothèses biomécaniques à propos des mécanismes d'action de la manipulation vertébrale

Pour ce qui est des hypothèses exclusivement biomécaniques, plusieurs peuvent être mentionnées :

-La MV permettrait de libérer des adhérences localisées dans les articulations inter-apophysaires [31, 33].

-La MV permettrait une diminution de la pression intra-discale et/ou une meilleure répartition des pics de pression intra-discaux [31].

Ces deux hypothèses semblent assez peu étayées et font l'objet de peu de littérature.



Plus récemment, les résultats de Branney et Breen (2014) tendent à confirmer un effet biomécanique de la MV [34]. Leurs résultats indiquent une relation dose-réponse modeste mais significative entre le nombre de MV reçues par des patients présentant une cervicalgie non spécifique et le nombre de segments rachidiens présentant une augmentation de leurs amplitudes sagittales mesurées par fluoroscopie quantitative [34]. Cependant, aucune corrélation n'a été trouvée entre l'augmentation de la mobilité segmentaire dans le plan sagittal et une amélioration clinique chez ces patients [34].

De manière générale, l'éventuel intérêt clinique des changements biomécaniques mesurés après MV reste à déterminer.

2.2. Les hypothèses neurophysiologiques à propos des mécanismes d'action de la manipulation vertébrale

Bialosky et col. (2009, 2018) proposent un modèle commun aux thérapies manuelles (massage, mobilisation et manipulation) afin de tenter d'expliquer leurs bénéfices cliniques dans le cas de douleurs d'origine musculosquelettique [30, 32]. Celui-ci se base sur la proposition qu'un stimulus mécanique, par exemple la MV, initierait un ensemble de réponses neurophysiologiques qui à leur tour seraient à l'origine des améliorations cliniques associées aux thérapies manuelles. Ce point de vue semble assez largement partagé par d'autres auteurs [29, 35, 36].

Ces réponses neurophysiologiques pourraient relever de mécanismes périphériques, spinaux et/ou supra-spinaux [29, 30, 32, 35]. Ce modèle nous amène à évoquer deux grandes hypothèses d'ordre neurophysiologique : la MV aurait une action sur les mécanismes de modulation de la douleur d'une part et, d'autre part, elle aurait une action sur l'activité neuromusculaire.

La MV est également utilisée dans le cadre de la prise en charge de troubles non-neuro-musculosquelettiques (e.g. dysménorrhées, asthme) [37, 38], et ce, également sur la base de différentes hypothèses neurophysiologiques. Si être exhaustif à ce sujet paraît difficile, une de ces hypothèses, du fait de sa popularité, sera abordée dans cette section. Il s'agit de l'effet qu'aurait la MV sur l'activité autonome [39].

a. Manipulation vertébrale et douleur

Plusieurs revues systématiques de la littérature supportent l'hypothèse selon laquelle la MV serait à l'origine d'une diminution transitoire de la sensibilité à la douleur (induite



expérimentalement), indiquant ainsi un effet hypoalgésique [40-42]. Ces revues supportent un effet à minima locorégional de la MV sur le seuil de perception de la douleur chez des sujets sains [40, 42] et chez des sujets symptomatiques [41], suggérant l'activation de mécanismes inhibiteurs segmentaires.

Les revues systématiques de la littérature de Coronado et al. (2012) [41] et, dans une moindre mesure, de Millan et al. (2012) [40], rapportent un seuil de sensibilité à la douleur augmenté également à distance du site manipulé, ce qui suggère cette fois une inhibition régulée par des mécanismes supra-spinaux.

Les mécanismes spinaux et/ou supra-spinaux impliqués dans cet effet hypoalgésique sont actuellement à l'étude [43, 44] et restent à identifier [44] et/ou à confirmer [43]. Les éventuels bénéfices cliniques de cet effet hypoalgésique restent à investiguer.

b. Manipulation vertébrale et activité neuromusculaire

D'un point de vue clinique, l'étude des changements de l'activité neuromusculaire des muscles paravertébraux au repos ou lors de tâches simples en réponse à la MV est motivée par l'hypothèse selon laquelle la MV serait à l'origine d'une diminution des spasmes musculaires et/ou d'une amélioration du recrutement de ces muscles lors de tâches simples [45, 46].

Différents auteurs ont rapporté des modifications transitoires et brèves de l'activité neuromusculaire au niveau des muscles paravertébraux situés à proximité de la zone manipulée, ce chez des sujets sains [45-47] ainsi que chez des sujets souffrant de lombalgies [45, 46].

D'autres auteurs se sont intéressés aux changements susceptibles d'avoir lieu plus en amont en utilisant le réflexe de Hoffmann (ou réflexe H), celui-ci reflétant, entre autres, l'état d'excitabilité des motoneurons alpha [31, 45]. Une diminution transitoire de leur excitabilité a été rapportée [31, 45]. Là encore, l'éventuel intérêt clinique d'un tel changement reste à déterminer.

c. Manipulation vertébrale et activité autonome

Une augmentation transitoire de l'activité sympathique couplée à une diminution de la douleur a été rapportée après traitement par thérapie manuelle chez des sujets sains et chez des sujets symptomatiques [48, 49]. Ces résultats sont discutés comme étant en faveur d'un mécanisme



d'action supra-segmentaire commun qui impliquerait, notamment, la substance grise périaqueducale [48, 50].

Ces résultats en faveur d'une augmentation transitoire de l'activité sympathique ont essentiellement été obtenus à travers des études dont le but était d'investiguer les changements neurophysiologiques en réponse à la mobilisation vertébrale et non à la MV [48-50]. En effet, la survenue de changements de paramètres autonomes en réponse à la MV apparaît inconstante et lorsque de tels changements sont rapportés leur direction vers une augmentation de l'activité sympathique ou, au contraire, de l'activité parasympathique, apparaît disparate [39].

En général, les mécanismes d'action responsables des changements autonomes mesurés post-MV restent à déterminer. Il en est de même pour les éventuels bénéfices cliniques que ces changements pourraient représenter.

3. Les indications de la manipulation vertébrale

L'utilisation de la MV dans la prise en charge de certains troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques apparaît en accord avec les données de la littérature [38, 51-55]. Ainsi, elle est principalement indiquée dans le traitement des lombalgies ou cervicalgies non-spécifiques aiguës, subaiguës ou chroniques [51, 53-55] ainsi que dans la prise en charge de certains types de céphalées [52]. Elle se place le plus souvent comme une alternative à d'autres modalités thérapeutiques communément utilisées pour ce type de troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques [38, 51, 55].

Le recours à la MV dans le cadre de la prise en charge de troubles non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques ne bénéficie en revanche pas de preuves scientifiques robustes [38, 56].

Résumé à propos des hypothèses concernant les mécanismes d'action de la manipulation vertébrale et de ses indications

De multiples hypothèses concernant les mécanismes d'action de la MV existent à travers la littérature scientifique mais ces mécanismes restent largement mal compris. Par ailleurs, les changements mécaniques et neurophysiologiques rapportés ont pour la plupart été évalués immédiatement post-intervention, sans mise en évidence ou sans avoir investigué d'éventuelles relations avec un bénéfice clinique.



Les interrogations entourant les mécanismes d'actions de la MV contribuent probablement à la poursuite de son utilisation dans le cadre de la prise en charge de troubles non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques, malgré des preuves scientifiques probantes ne concernant que certains troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques.

C. La chiropraxie : une profession composite

Préambule

De manière simpliste, deux types de chiropracteurs peuvent être décrits en fonction des conditions qu'ils prennent en charge : ceux ayant une pratique exclusivement neuro-musculo-squelettique, principalement centrée sur les affections mécaniques du rachis, et ceux combinant pratiques neuro-musculo-squelettique et non-neuro-musculo-squelettique. Le cas de la NF sera abordé dans cette partie de manière relativement générale, la première partie de ce travail de doctorat ayant consisté à décrire ce qu'est la NF dans un contexte chiropratique.

1. Les chiropracteurs 'neuro-musculo-squelettiques'

Les chiropracteurs que nous nommerons ici 'neuro-musculo-squelettiques' sont ceux ayant une pratique conforme au cadre réglementaire français (cf. § II. A.). Celui-ci ayant été établi sur la base des données scientifiques les plus probantes, ces chiropracteurs peuvent aussi être considérés comme des praticiens ayant une pratique tendant à être fondée sur les preuves.

Il est intéressant de relever que cette pratique 'neuro-musculo-squelettique' correspond au rôle que le grand public [23, 57] et d'autres thérapeutes [9, 10, 58] attribuent aux chiropracteurs.

2. Les chiropracteurs 'neuro-musculo-squelettiques et non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques'

La prise en charge de troubles autres que neuro-musculo-squelettiques en chiropraxie repose sur diverses théories. L'une d'entre-elles a déjà été évoquée : la MV aurait une action sur le système nerveux autonome [39]. Nous nous arrêterons spécifiquement dans cette section sur une hypothèse plus ancienne, celle de la théorie de la « subluxation chiropratique », telle que défendue par le fondateur de la chiropraxie Daniel David Palmer [59]. En effet, à l'issue de la *scoping review*



effectuée dans le cadre de ce travail de doctorat, un parallèle a été fait entre cette théorie et celle proposée en NF. Il convient donc de l'expliquer, au moins brièvement.

DD Palmer fonde la chiropraxie en 1895 sur la base d'une théorie selon laquelle la plupart des maladies ou des symptômes auraient une cause unique, la « subluxation » [59] (p.51). Plus précisément, cette théorie repose sur la proposition qu'une force, que DD Palmer nomme « intelligence innée », serait responsable de l'entretien de la santé et de l'apparition des maladies [59] (p.109). Les maladies seraient le résultat d'interférences dans la circulation de cette force. Ces interférences seraient localisées pour la plupart au niveau du rachis, et ce, du fait de vertèbres 'déplacées', i.e. des « subluxations ». Ces subluxations altéreraient le 'flux' de cette force devant être distribuée à l'ensemble des organes du corps humain afin d'en assurer le bon fonctionnement [59] (p.56). Enfin, toujours selon cette théorie originelle, la réduction de ces « subluxations » à l'aide de l'ajustement vertébral permettrait de rétablir une circulation optimale de « l'intelligence innée » et donc une bonne santé [59] (p.56).

Malgré le fait que cette théorie ait évolué au cours du temps [60], plus ou moins en fonction de l'avancée des connaissances dans divers domaines, l'existence de « subluxations » reste à ce jour à l'état d'hypothèse. Il peut ainsi paraître étonnant que des chiropracteurs continuent à pratiquer sur les bases de cette théorie [3] et que des étudiants en chiropraxie portent des idées en émanant directement [61].

NB : Dans le cadre de la troisième contribution scientifique de ce travail, une théorie contemporaine de la « subluxation » est succinctement expliquée en introduction du manuscrit s'y rapportant (cf. Annexe 3).

3. La Neurologie Fonctionnelle

3.1 Contextualisation de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle

Comme indiqué en introduction, la NF, aussi appelée « Neurologie Chiropratique », a été fondée à la fin des années 70 par FR Carrick [11], chiropracteur canadien, également fondateur du *Carrick Institute*. Si la NF apparaît surtout présente au sein de la profession chiropratique, d'autres praticiens peuvent y être formés [62]. Nous l'avons également évoqué, cette approche a déjà attiré de nombreux praticiens dans différents pays [11].

Le *Carrick Institute*, présenté comme actuellement leader dans la formation en NF [11],



propose une série de séminaires de formation à travers le monde [15]. Pour être dit « neurologue fonctionnel », un chiropracteur doit suivre un minimum de 300 heures de formation et passer avec succès l'*American Chiropractic Neurology Board* (ACNB) [62], examen sanctionné par l'une des associations professionnelles chiropratiques aux Etats-Unis (l'*American Chiropractic Association*) [11]. Cet examen permet d'être « *Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Neurology Board* » (DACNB).

La diffusion de la NF se fait essentiellement par transmission orale, via ce type de séminaires ; ils sont dispensés par différents organismes privés [16-18]. Cette voie de diffusion s'accompagne d'un manque d'écrits (hors contenus internet), notamment de nature scientifique, facilement accessibles qui permettraient de pleinement comprendre ce qu'est la NF.

De ce fait également, être en mesure de présenter l'ACNB présente un coût financier important. Par exemple, les séminaires récemment proposés en France par le *Carrick Institute* avaient un coût compris entre 499\$ et 599\$. A raison de 15 heures de formation par séminaire, il faudrait ainsi déboursier un minimum de 9980\$ avant de prétendre au passage de l'ACNB.

3.2. Définitions de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle

a. Définition du *Carrick Institute*

Le *Carrick Institute* définit la NF comme une « spécialité » chiropratique, comme nous en connaissons en médecine conventionnelle [62]. Les « neurologues fonctionnels » sont décrits comme exerçant de manière similaire aux neurologues, à la différence que le traitement mis en place n'est ni médicamenteux, ni chirurgical [62]. Cette définition de la NF et de ses praticiens est étonnamment vague et ne permet pas ou très peu de comprendre de quoi il s'agit.

b. Définition de la *Functional Neurology Society*

NB : Le site internet de la *Functional Neurology Society* (<https://functionalneurologysociety.com>) n'est à l'heure actuelle plus actif ; il l'était au moment de la rédaction de cette section du manuscrit. Des captures d'écrans ont été conservées afin de justifier nos propos.

A travers son site internet, la *Functional Neurology Society* nous a apporté davantage d'informations sur ce qu'est la NF. Selon sa définition, la NF consiste à identifier et traiter des zones de



« faiblesse » au sein du système nerveux [63]. Ces zones de « faiblesse » semblent principalement localisées dans le cerveau [63] ; elles seraient responsables d'un grand nombre de symptômes [64].

C'est à travers l'identification et le traitement de ces zones de « faiblesse », décrites comme réversibles, que les « neurologues fonctionnels » pourraient prendre en charge un large panel de conditions et symptômes de nature très variée (e.g. radiculopathie d'origine mécanique, troubles du mouvement, symptômes post-accidents vasculaires cérébraux, épilepsie) [64]. Le traitement de NF est décrit comme s'appuyant sur les mécanismes de neuroplasticité dont notre système nerveux est pourvu, se composant de différents types de stimuli, par exemple, la MV ou des stimulations sonores, visuelles et olfactives [65].

3.3. Neurologie Fonctionnelle : une approche a priori scientifiquement fondée

Science et recherche paraissent au centre de la pratique de la NF, lui conférant, au moins de prime abord, une apparente crédibilité scientifique.

Par exemple, nous pouvons lire sur le site internet du *Carrick Institute* que celui-ci a pour mission “*to empower each learner with the tools necessary to serve humankind as the Clinical Neurologists of tomorrow by providing them with the most up-to-date information available today.*” [11] ou encore que le curriculum proposé au sein de cet institut “*has been designed by ... who continues to pioneer cutting edge concepts and applications in clinical neuroscience.* » [62]. Ce même site dispose d'une section « *Research* » ainsi que d'un blog avec une section « *Research* » [17], faisant apparaître la NF et ses praticiens à la pointe des neurosciences et ancrés dans une démarche de recherche scientifique.

Le site internet de la *Functional Neurology Society* [63] ainsi que celui d'autres associations professionnelles de NF telle que l'*International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation* (IAFNR) [66], association ayant pour but de « promouvoir l'éducation et la recherche dans le domaine de la NF », laissent au lecteur cette même impression de sérieux. Par ailleurs, l'IAFNR finance un journal scientifique intitulé *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation and Ergonomics* (FNRE). Celui-ci ayant parmi ses objectifs de publier sur des sujets de NF [67].

Cependant, en cherchant à s'informer à propos de la NF sur internet, nous pouvons également nous apercevoir qu'elle fait l'objet de critiques vigoureuses. Ces critiques dénoncent une absence de fondements scientifiques, la qualifiant de pseudoscience [19-21].



Résumé à propos de la profession composite qu'est la chiropraxie

De nombreux chiropracteurs ont abandonné les concepts appartenant à l'histoire de la profession pour adopter une pratique tendant à être fondée sur les faits. Toutefois, certains membres de la profession continuent à pratiquer sur les bases de ces mêmes concepts, dont celui de « subluxation ».

Dans ce paysage hétérogène, la NF est difficile à situer. De prime abord, elle renvoie une image de pratique scientifiquement fondée, rejoignant les chiropracteurs 'neuro-musculo-squelettiques'. Cependant, la NF apparaît reposer sur une théorie originale qui lui permettrait de concerner un grand nombre de patients souffrant de conditions et symptômes de nature très variée, rejoignant davantage les chiropracteurs 'neuro-musculo-squelettiques et non neuro-musculo-squelettiques'. Les critiques à son encontre la rapprochent également de ces derniers.

D. Les pratiques pseudoscientifiques

Préambule

Initialement, nous nous interrogeons à propos de la validité scientifique de la NF. Bien que nous ayons eu très tôt au cours de notre processus de recherche connaissance des critiques à son encontre [19-21], ce n'est que dans un second temps, à travers l'accumulation des informations et faits récoltés, qu'il nous est apparu que s'il s'avérait que la NF n'était pas étayée par quelque preuve scientifique, alors nous pourrions être face à une pratique pseudoscientifique. Il convient donc de définir ici ce qui est entendu par *pseudoscience* ou *pratique pseudoscientifique*.

1. Définition d'une pratique pseudoscientifique

Pour les besoins de ce travail, nous avons retenu la définition des pratiques pseudoscientifiques proposée par Lilienfeld et *al.* (2008, 2012) : « disciplines qui affichent en superficie une apparence scientifique mais qui n'en ont pas la substance » [68, 69]. Cette définition est partagée par différents auteurs [70-74]. Lilienfeld et *al.* (2012) soulignent qu'une pratique pseudoscientifique n'est pas nécessairement entièrement invalide ou inefficace, mais que les affirmations dont elle est à l'origine outrepassent largement les preuves scientifiques disponibles [69].

L'apparente crédibilité scientifique des pratiques pseudoscientifiques fait qu'elles ne sont pas toujours faciles à identifier en tant que telles. Cependant, certains éléments ou signes sont décrits



comme caractéristiques de ce type de pratiques, qu'elles relèvent ou non du domaine de la santé [68, 69, 71-75].

2. Les 10 « signes d'alarme » proposés par Lilienfeld et al.

Lilienfeld et al. (2012) proposent 10 « signes d'alarme » ou critères devant nous faire penser que nous avons potentiellement à faire à une pratique pseudoscientifique [69]. Plus une pratique compte de ces signes, plus il est probable qu'elle soit pseudoscientifique [69]. Ces auteurs ont proposé ces 10 critères comme un outil 'simple d'utilisation' afin de permettre en particulier (mais pas exclusivement) à des psychologues cliniciens de distinguer théories et pratiques scientifiques vs. pseudoscientifiques. Le contexte professionnel dans lequel évoluent les psychologues cliniciens nous est apparu proche de celui des chiropracteurs, les membres des deux professions étant exposés à une large offre de formations à des approches de tous types, pas toujours scientifiquement fondées.

Si les 10 « signes d'alarme » à suivre sont issus de Lilienfeld et al. (2012) [69], ces signes ainsi que le principe d'accumulation de ces signes pour identifier une pratique pseudoscientifique sont évoqués par d'autres auteurs [68, 71-76].

2.1. Manque de falsifiabilité et/ou surutilisation d'hypothèses *ad hoc*

Théories et pratiques pseudoscientifiques sont souvent difficilement falsifiables voire infalsifiables du fait de l'impossibilité ou quasi impossibilité de les réfuter sur la base d'investigations scientifiques rigoureuses [68, 69, 71, 72, 75].

La surutilisation d'hypothèses *ad hoc* renvoie à la propension qu'ont les pseudosciences à avancer des explications face à tout résultat venant contredire leurs théories [68-72].

2.2. Manque d'autocorrection

Dans le domaine des sciences, des connaissances nouvelles, plus proches de la vérité, peuvent en remplacer d'autres n'ayant pas 'résisté' à un examen critique rigoureux. Il s'agit d'un processus dit d'autocorrection, inhérent à la démarche scientifique [68-72]. Celui-ci est décrit comme faisant souvent défaut aux pseudosciences qui se caractérisent par une forme de résistance au



changement, parfois durant une longue période, et ce, malgré d'éventuelles preuves scientifiques en défaveur des idées défendues [68, 69, 75].

2.3. Accent mis sur les confirmations

Il est nécessaire ici d'évoquer la notion de biais de confirmation. Il s'agit d'un biais susceptible de survenir du fait de la tendance que nous avons tous, dans des proportions diverses, à rechercher ou accepter des preuves en accord avec nos croyances et à nier, rejeter ou distordre les preuves ne les satisfaisant pas [68, 69].

Alors qu'en science la réalisation d'études aux schémas robustes (e.g. essai contrôlé randomisé en double aveugle) doit permettre d'éliminer cette tendance, celle-ci ne faisant pas défaut aux chercheurs, cette précaution n'est en général pas prise dans le cas des pseudosciences. Ainsi, elles ne s'inscrivent pas dans une démarche d'évaluation dont l'issue pourrait être le rejet de leurs théories et de leurs pratiques [68, 69, 71, 74-76].

2.4. Evitement de l'évaluation par les pairs et/ou production d'une littérature de faible qualité méthodologique

Les pratiques pseudoscientifiques ont habituellement pour tendance de vouloir échapper au processus d'évaluation par les pairs, disséminant leurs théories avant même d'avoir fait l'objet d'une évaluation critique de la part d'experts indépendants [69, 71, 74].

Ce critère n'implique pas nécessairement l'absence de littérature à propos de la pratique potentiellement problématique, certaines pseudosciences pouvant se prévaloir de produire de la recherche. Cependant, celle-ci est alors généralement de faible qualité méthodologique [69, 75] et/ou son évaluation se ferait 'en interne' [68, 70].

2.5. Excès de confiance basé sur des témoignages et des preuves anecdotiques

Les pseudosciences tendent à s'appuyer davantage sur des témoignages ou des preuves anecdotiques que sur des preuves scientifiques robustes, parfois même après que des preuves scientifiques aient démontré leur absence de fondements [68, 69, 71].



2.6. Prétentions extraordinaires

Une pratique pseudoscientifique a tendance à afficher des prétentions extraordinaires sans en fournir des preuves tangibles [68, 69, 74]. Un exemple simple d'affirmation « extraordinaire » est une approche thérapeutique annonçant un taux de réussite de 100% ou quasi 100% pour une voire plusieurs conditions données.

2.7. Absence de 'connexion' avec les connaissances établies

La science est décrite comme étant un processus cumulatif, des nouvelles connaissances venant s'ajouter à d'autres déjà acceptées. Au contraire, une pseudoscience a tendance à être 'déconnectée' de ces connaissances préexistantes, préférant proposer un 'nouveau' paradigme [68-72, 75].

2.8. *Ad antequitem fallacy* ou l'argument de la tradition

Ce critère renvoie au fait que lorsqu'une théorie ou une pratique est populaire depuis déjà plusieurs années, il est tentant d'assumer que celle-ci est valide. Les pseudosciences sont susceptibles d'user de cet argument [68, 69]. Dit simplement, « tradition ne devrait pas être confondu avec validation » [68, 69].

2.9. Usage d'un langage « hyper-technique »

Une pratique pseudoscientifique est souvent présentée par ces promoteurs à l'aide d'un langage « hyper-technique », emprunté à des champs de la science, certainement dans un souci de crédibilisation de leur pratique [68-72]. Ce langage « hyper-technique » manque cependant souvent de précision ou de sens, voire des deux [69, 70, 72].

2.10. Absence de limites au champ d'application

Les pratiques ou théories scientifiques impliquent de définir les limites dans lesquelles elles s'appliquent. A contrario, une pratique pseudoscientifique se caractérise souvent par l'absence de



limites, apparaissant comme applicable à virtuellement n'importe quelle situation clinique [69, 71].

D'autres « signes d'alarme » pourraient être cités afin de compléter ceux venant d'être mentionnés. Parmi eux, il est proposé (i) que les pratiques pseudoscientifiques ont souvent comme premier objectif leur dissémination et non pas l'évaluation scientifique rigoureuse de leurs propositions [71, 72, 76] et (ii) qu'elles sont souvent dans l'attente que l'évaluation scientifique de leurs affirmations provienne d'autrui [68, 71, 72, 76]. Cette volonté de ne pas endosser la charge de la preuve leur permettrait de poursuivre leurs activités sous couvert de l'argument qu'aucune preuve solide n'existe à leur encontre [68].

Résumé à propos des pratiques pseudoscientifiques

Une pratique peut être qualifiée de pseudoscientifique lorsqu'elle « affiche en superficie une apparence scientifique mais qu'elle n'en a pas la substance ». De nombreux « signes d'alarme » sont à notre disposition afin d'éveiller notre attention quant à l'éventuel caractère pseudoscientifiques d'une pratique (thérapeutique ou non) *a priori* scientifiquement fondée. Leur accumulation est en faveur de ce 'diagnostic'.



III PROBLEMATIQUE GENERALE ET OBJECTIFS DE RECHERCHE

Le but de cette thèse est (i) de contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de ce qu'est la NF, telle que fondée et diffusée par FR Carrick auprès des chiropracteurs, et (ii) d'en évaluer la validité scientifique, plus particulièrement dans un contexte chiropratique, ce afin de tenter de statuer sur son caractère scientifique ou, au contraire, pseudoscientifique. Pour cela, les objectifs de recherche suivants ont été définis :

- 1) Décrire ce qu'est la NF en termes de concepts fondamentaux et d'applications cliniques dans un contexte chiropratique.
- 2) Décrire les preuves scientifiques disponibles concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF à partir d'une recherche bibliographique effectuée dans le journal scientifique *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*.
- 3) Déterminer si la MV a un *effet* sur l'activité cérébrale et, si oui, si celui-ci s'accompagne d'un bénéfice clinique chez des sujets sains et/ou symptomatiques ; postulat central en NF.

NB : Ce travail de doctorat s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un programme de recherche plus global ayant pour objet la NF. Un autre projet doctoral est actuellement en cours, il s'intéresse (i) à l'histoire et au développement de cette approche, (ii) à l'intérêt des étudiants en chiropraxie pour la NF ainsi qu'à certains déterminants susceptibles d'entrer en jeu dans leur adhésion à la NF et (iii) à l'évidence disponible concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF à travers les publications de son fondateur, FR Carrick.

Afin de remplir nos objectifs de recherche, une *scoping review*, une revue critique de la littérature et une revue systématique critique de la littérature ont été réalisées. Deux de ces revues ont fait l'objet de publications dans le journal scientifique à comité de lecture *Chiropractic & Manual Therapies* [77, 78] et la troisième est à l'état de manuscrit, celui-ci sera prochainement soumis dans ce même journal. L'ensemble de ces contributions scientifiques se trouve en annexes de la thèse (cf. Annexes 1 à 3).

Seuls les points principaux de la méthode et des résultats de ces travaux sont rapportés ci-après, à l'exception de la *scoping review* pour laquelle la méthode, moins conventionnelle, a été davantage décrite. Les résultats de cette première revue ont également été suffisamment détaillés afin de permettre au lecteur de comprendre ce qu'est la NF dans un contexte chiropratique ainsi que les différentes étapes de notre programme de recherche.



IV CONTRIBUTIONS SCIENTIFIQUES

A. Scoping review : Description de ce qu'est la Neurologie Fonctionnelle en termes de concepts fondamentaux et d'applications cliniques dans un contexte chiropratique.

Comme précédemment mentionné, il n'est pas aisé de comprendre en quoi consiste exactement la NF, notamment du fait d'un manque d'écrits détaillés facilement accessibles. Cette première étape était ainsi essentielle, y compris afin d'identifier les points pertinents à évaluer au cours des deux étapes suivantes de ce travail.

Objectifs de recherche

Les objectifs de recherche de cette *scoping review* sont les suivants :

- 1) Décrire, de manière simple, les concepts fondamentaux de la NF.
- 2) Décrire les applications cliniques de la NF, i.e. (i) ses indications proposées, (ii) les procédures diagnostiques et (iii) modalités thérapeutiques utilisées, (iv) les plans de traitements proposés, et (v) les résultats cliniques obtenus ou escomptés.

La NF n'étant pas uniquement une approche destinée aux chiropracteurs et celle-ci étant apparemment composée de 'sous-spécialités' n'incluant pas nécessairement de modalités thérapeutiques habituellement utilisées en chiropraxie, cette revue a été limitée à la NF en tant qu'approche complémentaire à une pratique 'classique' de la chiropraxie, c'est à dire incluant au moins une modalité de thérapie manuelle. Si seuls les troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques font partie du champ de compétence légal du chiropracteur (au moins en France), nous avons fait le choix de ne pas limiter nos recherches à la NF appliquée à ce type de troubles afin de nous permettre d'acquérir une compréhension suffisamment globale de la NF.

1. Méthode

Une *scoping review* a été réalisée à partir de quatre sources d'informations : un manuel, la littérature



scientifique, des sites internet, et des interviews semi-structurées. Celle-ci a été conduite sur la base des recommandations méthodologiques faites par Arksey et O'Malley [79].

1.1. Stratégies de recherche, collection et extraction des informations

a. Manuel

Un manuel de NF [80], le seul à notre connaissance contenant les concepts fondamentaux de la NF dans un cadre de thérapie manuelle, a été utilisé comme base pour ce travail. L'avant-propos de ce manuel est de FR Carrick et, il est recommandé par l'*American Chiropractic Neurology Board* en préparation du DACNB [81].

Collection et extraction des informations issues du manuel

L'ensemble du manuel a été lu afin d'acquérir une vue d'ensemble de la NF puisque les auteurs de la revue ne connaissaient pas cette approche à ce stade du projet. Puis, les chapitres d'intérêt pour la collection et l'extraction des informations en relation avec nos objectifs de recherche ont été sélectionnés sur la base de sa table des matières.

Seuls les concepts théoriques nous ayant paru fondamentaux ont été rapportés dans les résultats de la revue. Les informations ont été extraites par un des auteurs de la revue (ALM) et ont été rapportées de manière narrative.

b. Littérature scientifique

Une recherche bibliographique conventionnelle par mots clés n'ayant pas pu être réalisée, des alternatives ont dû être trouvées afin d'obtenir des articles scientifiques à propos de la NF. Celles-ci sont brièvement décrites ci-dessous et sont détaillées en *Appendix 1* de l'article d'origine (cf. Annexe 1).

- Une recherche bibliographique par nom d'auteur a été effectuée via le moteur de recherche PubMed ainsi que les bases de données PsycINFO et SPORTDiscuss.

Les auteurs concernés avaient préalablement été identifiés comme acteurs majeurs au sein du mouvement de NF : FR Carrick, R Melillo et G Leisman.

- Vingt-deux praticiens et/ou chercheurs impliqués en NF ont été contactés par courriels afin d'obtenir leurs listes de publications à jour.



- Sur les recommandations de G Leisman, une recherche bibliographique dans le journal scientifique FNRE, journal ayant parmi ses objectifs de publier sur des sujets de NF, a été effectuée.
- Enfin, une recherche au sein de la liste de références des articles inclus avant cette dernière étape a été faite.

Critères d'éligibilité des articles scientifiques

Les articles pouvaient être inclus quel que soit le schéma des études y étant rapportées, dès lors qu'ils décrivaient une prise en charge selon des concepts de NF, ceux-ci ayant été préalablement identifiés à travers le manuel précédemment mentionné. L'approche de NF décrite dans ces articles devait contenir au moins un élément de thérapie manuelle. Les articles portant uniquement sur une approche médicamenteuse ou sur des sujets présentant un état modifié de conscience n'étaient pas inclus.

Collection et extraction des informations issues des articles scientifiques

Le premier auteur (ALM) a effectué la sélection des articles à partir des titres et résumés obtenus via le moteur de recherche et les bases de données ainsi que des listes de références transmises par les personnes contactées. Deux des auteurs (ALM et CLY) ont effectué la sélection des articles à partir des titres et résumés du journal FNRE. L'ensemble des auteurs de cette revue étant encore peu familiers avec la NF à ce stade, la sélection à partir des titres et des résumés a été large afin d'éviter d'exclure des articles potentiellement pertinents. L'ensemble des textes entiers ont été évalués pour inclusion de manière indépendante par deux auteurs (ALM et CLY).

Un tableau descriptif a été créé afin d'y reporter de manière systématique les informations issues de la littérature en relation avec nos objectifs de recherche (cf. *Appendix 3a* de l'article en Annexe 1). Deux auteurs (ALM et CLY) ont extrait les informations de manière indépendante à partir de chaque article inclus puis, le contenu du tableau de chacun de ces deux auteurs a été comparé.

c. Sites internet

Des sites internet de chiropracteurs se présentant comme « neurologues fonctionnels » et mentionnant être titulaires du DACNB ont été inclus en tant que sources d'informations. Ces sites internet ont été obtenus à partir d'une recherche effectuée via le moteur de recherche Google en utilisant le mot clé « *Functional Neurology* ».



Collection et extraction des informations issues des sites internet

L'ensemble du contenu des sites internet, à l'exception de leur blog, a été lu à la recherche d'informations en relation avec nos objectifs de recherche, ce par ordre d'apparition sur Google (recherche effectuée en septembre 2016). Le nombre de sites internet inclus dans la revue a été déterminé sur un principe de saturation des informations, ce pour chacun des objectifs de recherche.

Les informations collectées ont été reportées de manière systématique dans un tableau descriptif (cf. *Appendix 3b* de l'article en Annexe 1). L'ensemble de ce processus de collection et d'extraction des informations issues des sites internet a été effectué à deux reprises par l'un des auteurs (ALM).

d. Interviews semi-structurées

Sur un critère de proximité géographique, cinq chiropracteurs identifiés comme pratiquant la NF ont été contactés. Pour être contacté, un chiropracteur devait soit être titulaire / avoir été titulaire du DACNB ou, à défaut, être dans un processus actif de formation en NF. Parmi les cinq chiropracteurs sollicités, quatre ont accepté de participer à une interview semi-structurée. Leur anonymat a été conservé et leur consentement a été obtenu.

Collection et extraction des informations issues des interviews

Les questions posées au cours de ces interviews ont été déterminées par deux étudiantes en doctorat (ALM et Marine Demortier). Ces questions devaient permettre de collecter des informations en rapport avec leurs objectifs de recherche respectifs (cf. *Appendix 2* de l'article en Annexe 1). Ces mêmes étudiantes ont réalisé conjointement l'ensemble des interviews, chacune ayant eu la responsabilité de retranscrire de manière narrative deux d'entre elles sur la base des enregistrements effectués. Ces retranscriptions narratives ont été envoyées pour validation et/ou modifications aux chiropracteurs interviewés.

Sur la base de ces mêmes retranscriptions (une fois celles-ci validées par les chiropracteurs interviewés), les informations en relation avec nos objectifs de recherche ont été reportées de manière systématique dans un tableau semblable à ceux utilisés pour les articles scientifiques et les sites internet (cf. *Appendix 3c* de l'article en Annexe 1). Les deux étudiantes ayant conduit les interviews ont réalisé cette étape de manière indépendante puis, le contenu du tableau de chacune d'elle a été comparé.



1.2. Analyse et synthèse des informations

Parmi les quatre sources d'informations utilisées, il a été déterminé lesquelles permettaient d'apporter des informations substantielles en relation avec les six objectifs de recherche de cette *scoping review* (cf. Tableau 1). Puis, chaque objectif de recherche a été traité séparément, des synthèses sous formes de tableaux et/ou narratives ont été faites pour chacun d'eux. Le processus d'analyse et de synthèse des informations est détaillé en *Appendix 4* de la revue (cf. Annexe 1).

2. Résultats

2.1. Informations générales

Comme montré dans le Tableau 1, seul le manuel a été utilisé pour extraire les concepts fondamentaux de la NF dans un contexte chiropratique. Les trois autres sources d'informations ne contenaient que des informations éparses à ce propos, raison pour laquelle nous avons choisi d'utiliser uniquement le manuel. Concernant les cinq autres objectifs de recherche, ces trois autres sources nous ont cependant permis de collecter des informations (cf. Tableau 1).

Les différentes étapes de la recherche bibliographique dont le processus est illustré dans la *Figure 1* de la revue (cf. Annexe 1) ont abouti à 11 articles, dont neuf études de cas [82-90], un essai avec groupe contrôle [25] et un essai contrôlé randomisé [91].

Les informations collectées à travers la lecture des sites internet se sont avérées rapidement saturées. Cinq sites internet ont été utilisés, tous étaient de chiropracteurs pratiquant aux Etats-Unis [92-96].

L'homogénéité des informations collectées à travers les quatre interviews semi-structurées n'a pas rendu nécessaire de solliciter d'autres praticiens en NF. Les retranscriptions narratives envoyées aux chiropracteurs interviewés n'ont nécessité que des modifications mineures, l'un d'entre eux ne nous ayant pas fait de retour. Il avait été convenu avec les interviewés que l'absence de retour sous un certain délai valait accord.



Tableau 1. Sources utilisées pour l’obtention d’informations en relation avec six objectifs de recherche dans le cadre d’une *scoping review* à propos de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte chiropratique [77]

Objectifs de recherche	Manuel (n=1)	Articles scientifiques		Sites internet (n=5)	Interviews (n=4)
		Essais (i) contrôlés randomisés, ou (ii) contrôlés (n=2)	Études de cas (n=9)		
Concepts	1				
Indications	1		9	5	4
Procédures diagnostiques	1	2	9	4	4
Modalités thérapeutiques	1	2	9	5	4
Plans de traitement			7	3	3
Résultats thérapeutiques	1		9	5	4

2.2. Résultats relatifs aux objectifs de recherche

a. Les concepts fondamentaux de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte chiropratique (informations issues du manuel)

Le concept de « lésion physiologique »

La NF consiste à détecter, évaluer et prendre en charge, de manière conservatrice, des ‘lésions’ dites « physiologiques » (i.e. « lésions physiologiques ») ou « fonctionnelles » [97]. Celles-ci sont décrites comme correspondant à des groupes de neurones identifiés comme ‘dysfonctionnels’ [98].

Ces groupes de neurones ‘dysfonctionnels’ sont décrits comme généralement localisés dans le cerveau et seraient à l’origine de nombreux symptômes de nature très diverse (cf. Tableau 2). Aussi, ces « lésions physiologiques » ne concerneraient généralement qu’un côté d’une structure cérébrale (e.g. un héli-cervelet), conduisant à des signes et/ou symptômes asymétriques [99]. Ces « lésions physiologiques » sont dites réversibles du fait des mécanismes de neuroplasticité dont est doté notre système nerveux [97].

En NF, une « lésion physiologique » est définie comme un groupe de neurones dont « l’état d’intégration centrale » est altéré [98]. Cet « état d’intégration centrale » peut être comparé à ‘l’état de santé’ dans lequel se trouverait un groupe de neurones. Cet ‘état de santé’ est décrit comme dépendant des apports (i) en oxygène et (ii) en nutriments, ainsi que (iii) de la quantité de stimulations que reçoit un groupe de neurones [98]. L’excès ou l’insuffisance d’un ou plusieurs de ces



trois paramètres conduirait à une ‘mauvaise santé’, autrement dit, à l’altération de son « état d’intégration centrale ». Si peu d’informations sont disponibles à ce sujet, différentes situations pourraient conduire à une perturbation des apports en oxygène, en nutriments et/ou de la quantité de stimulations : immobilisation d’un membre, présence d’une « subluxation chiropratique » et anoxie en sont des exemples.

Ces groupes de neurones en ‘mauvaise santé’ seraient ‘hyper-’ ou, au contraire, ‘hypo-actifs’ et seraient responsables d’une perturbation de la communication entre les différentes parties du système nerveux [98]. En effet, ces groupes de neurones ‘dysfonctionnels’ généreraient trop ou, au contraire, trop peu d’efférences à destination des structures avec lesquelles ils communiquent ; l’ensemble aboutirait à divers symptômes tels que ceux présentés dans le Tableau 2.

La voie cortico-réticulo-spinale

Si une « lésion physiologique » pourrait survenir en n’importe quel point du système nerveux, certaines voies neurologiques font l’objet de plus d’intérêt que d’autres en NF. En effet, le fonctionnement de certaines structures intervenant dans ces voies serait particulièrement important à évaluer. C’est le cas de l’une des voies cortico-réticulo-spinales. Deux voies cortico-réticulo-spinales sont décrites, l’une médiale et l’autre latérale [100]. En NF, la voie cortico-réticulo-spinale faisant principalement l’objet d’intérêt est décrite comme débutant d’un hémisphère cérébral, passant (principalement) par la formation réticulée pontomédullaire ipsilatérale et se terminant, pour la plupart des fibres, au niveau de la substance grise de la moelle épinière, également de façon ipsilatérale (correspondant à la voie cortico-réticulo-spinale médiale) [98].

L’importance de cette voie résiderait pour le « neurologue fonctionnel » dans les fonctions dont elle aurait la charge, c’est à dire (i) une facilitation du tonus de la musculature ipsilatérale, (ii) une inhibition des muscles antérieurs ipsilatéraux au-dessus de T6 et des muscles postérieurs ipsilatéraux en dessous de ce même niveau, (iii) une inhibition ipsilatérale de l’information nociceptive, et (iv) une inhibition ipsilatérale de l’activité sympathique [98]. Cette voie nous permet d’illustrer le concept de « lésion physiologique » et de ses conséquences.

Si une « lésion physiologique » concerne l’ensemble des neurones d’un hémisphère cérébral et que ces derniers sont ‘hypo-actifs’, correspondant en NF à une « hémisphéricité », alors cet hémisphère cérébral diminuerait ses efférences à destination de la formation réticulée pontomédullaire ipsilatérale.



A son tour, la formation réticulée pontomédullaire réduirait ses efférences à destination de la moelle épinière. A l'examen clinique de NF, cela se traduirait par (i) une diminution globale du tonus musculaire, (ii) une posture en flexion du membre supérieur et en extension du membre inférieur, (iii) des douleurs, et (iv) une augmentation de l'activité sympathique (e.g. augmentation de la pression artérielle, sudation), le tout ipsilatéral à « l'hémisphéricité » [98]. Autrement dit, l'identification de ses 'signes' à l'examen de NF permettrait de poser un 'diagnostic' de « lésion physiologique » d'un hémisphère cérébral et/ou d'une partie du tronc cérébral.

Le concept de « fatigabilité »

L'identification et l'évaluation de « l'état d'intégration centrale » de différents groupes de neurones sont au cœur de l'examen clinique de NF. Etant donné que cet « état d'intégration centrale » ne peut pas être directement objectivé (e.g. via des techniques de neuroimagerie), le « neurologue fonctionnel » interprète, à travers une batterie de tests principalement issus de l'examen neurologique conventionnel, les réponses des effecteurs tributaires, directement ou indirectement, du 'bon fonctionnement' des groupes de neurones qu'il souhaite évaluer. Par exemple, une manœuvre doigt-nez peut être effectuée pour évaluer « l'état d'intégration centrale » des parties droite et gauche du cervelet.

Cet examen de NF est réalisé de manière bilatérale, à la recherche d'asymétries des réponses des effecteurs testés ; ces asymétries seraient souvent mineures. Une asymétrie des réponses indiquerait une « lésion physiologique » en amont (cf. § IV. A. 2.2. *La voie cortico-réticulo-spinale*) [99].

Une « fatigabilité » serait un indicateur clé d'un « état d'intégration centrale » altéré. En NF, un groupe de neurones est dit en état de « fatigabilité » si l'effecteur qui en dépend n'est pas capable de maintenir une réponse constante à un stimulus prolongé ou répété [99]. Par exemple, lors de l'évaluation du réflexe pupillaire, si d'un côté la constriction pupillaire est moindre au fur et à mesure de stimuli lumineux répétés ou n'est pas maintenue en réponse à un stimulus lumineux prolongé en comparaison à son homologue controlatéral, une « fatigabilité » de la moitié droite ou gauche du tronc cérébral (en fonction de la pupille 'défaillante') sera suspectée. Un groupe de neurones est décrit comme étant plus ou moins « fatigable » [99] ; nous en verrons plus loin l'importance en NF (cf. § IV. A. 2.2. b. *Les modalités thérapeutiques*).



Le concept du « *blind spot* »

Ce concept est étroitement lié à l'histoire de la NF, celui-ci ayant été au centre du travail de thèse de FR Carrick [24] ainsi que de sa première publication sur un sujet de NF [25]. Ce test diagnostique est emprunté à l'ophtalmologie, discipline dans laquelle il est utilisé pour suivre des pathologies oculaires [101]. En NF, il est proposé que la taille du « *blind spot* » peut augmenter en l'absence de pathologie oculaire, lorsque « l'état d'intégration centrale » du cortex visuel controlatéral n'est pas optimal [99]. Par extension, cette « lésion physiologique » d'un héli-cortex visuel pourrait concerner l'ensemble de l'hémisphère cérébral dont il fait partie, correspondant alors en NF à une « hémisphéricité » [99]. Autrement dit, en NF ce test est utilisé pour 'diagnostiquer' une « hémisphéricité ». Comme l'ensemble des tests utilisés en NF, il permettrait également d'évaluer la réponse au traitement instauré, et ce, de manière immédiate [102].

La place de la manipulation vertébrale

Un des moyens de 'remédier' à une « hémisphéricité » serait de recourir à la MV [102]. Pour ce faire, la manipulation devrait être dispensée du côté de l'augmentation de la taille du « *blind spot* » ; il s'agit de la conclusion du premier article de FR Carrick sur un sujet de NF [25]. Ainsi, en NF, la MV est présentée comme un outil thérapeutique agissant sur l'activité cérébrale. L'explication proposée par FR Carrick et reprise par RW Beck, auteur du manuel utilisé comme source d'information afin de décrire les concepts fondamentaux de NF, est la suivante : la MV générerait des afférences à destination du thalamus qui, en réponse, augmenterait ses afférences au cortex cérébral [25, 98]. La quantité de stimulations de l'hémisphère 'déficient' serait ainsi 'rétablie' ou, à minima, 'améliorée' via les afférences générées par la MV (cf. § IV. A. 2.2. a. *Le concept de « lésion physiologique »*).

b. Les applications cliniques de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte chiropratique

Les indications proposées (informations issues des quatre sources)

Sur la base de nos quatre sources d'informations, la NF est présentée comme indiquée pour un grand nombre de conditions et symptômes de nature très variée, le plus souvent chroniques. Troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques, symptômes en lien avec des traumatismes crâniens, maladies neurodégénératives, maladies et symptômes d'origine neurologique ainsi que troubles



psychiatriques constituent les principales catégories d'indications identifiées (cf. Tableau 2). D'autres indications, n'entrant pas dans ces catégories, ainsi que des exemples précis d'indications sont rapportés dans le Tableau 2. De nombreuses indications mentionnées sur les sites internet et, dans une moindre mesure au cours des interviews, ne semblent pas avoir fait l'objet d'articles scientifiques.



Tableau 2. Indications proposées à une prise en charge en Neurologie Fonctionnelle selon quatre sources d'informations incluses dans une *scoping review* à propos de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte chiropratique (tableau original) [77]

Groups and/or subgroups of conditions		Source of information			
		Book	Articles	Websites	Interviews
Neuromusculoskeletal disorders	Headaches	NM	NM	X	X
	Others	Low back pain with radiculopathy Peripheral neuropathies	Low back pain Neck pain Ankle pain	Low back pain Radiculopathies Neck pain Peripheral neuropathies Spinal stenosis Upper/lower extremity conditions	Low back pain Radiculopathies Neck pain
Traumatic brain injuries (symptom(s) related to such injuries)		X	X	X	X
Neurological diseases or disorders	Neurodegenerative disease	Parkinson's disease	Parkinson's disease	Parkinson's disease Multiple sclerosis Alzheimer's disease	Parkinson's disease Multiple sclerosis
	Movement disorders	Dystonias	Cervical dystonia	Dystonia Tremor disorders	Dystonia
	Post-stroke symptoms	X	NM	X	X
	Others	Migraines Complex regional pain syndrome Dysautonomia	Migraines Complex regional pain syndrome Landau Kleffner syndrome	Migraines Seizure disorders Spinal cord lesions Fibromyalgia Restless legs	Migraines
Psychiatric disorders	Neurodevelopmental disorders	ADHD	ADHD	ADD/ADHD Dyslexia	ADD/ADHD « dys » disorders,



				Autism	including dyslexia
	Mood disorders	Anxiety Depression	NM*	Anxiety disorders Depression	NM
	Others	OCD	OCD Tourette's syndrome	OCD PTSD	PTSD
Various neurological and non-neurological symptoms		Tinnitus Deafness Muscle spasms Post manipulative therapy symptoms	Paresthesia	Balance disorders Vertigo Numbness Sleeping difficulties	Balance disorders Vertigo
Others		Oral dysplasia	Primary nocturnal enuresis	Physical, cognitive, academic and/or creativity enhancement Lyme disease	NM

NM: Condition(s) not mentioned by the source / Condition(s) non mentionnée(s) par la source

X: Condition(s) mentioned without specific example(s) by the source / Condition(s) mentionnée(s) par la source, sans exemple(s)

ADD/ADHD: Attention deficit disorder / attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder / Trouble du déficit de l'attention avec ou sans hyperactivité

*One reviewed article deals with mood disorders in a context of multiple symptoms related to traumatic brain injury. / L'un des articles inclus traitait de troubles de l'humeur faisant suite à un traumatisme crânien.

OCD: Obsessive compulsive disorder / Trouble obsessionnel compulsif

PTSD: Post-traumatic stress disorder / Syndrome de stress post-traumatique



Les procédures diagnostiques (informations issues des quatre sources)

En premier lieu, une anamnèse est effectuée et le patient est observé. Un examen physique général ainsi qu'une évaluation des signes vitaux peuvent être effectués. Si ces premières étapes diagnostiques doivent permettre d'éliminer une pathologie grave, en NF, elles constituent les premiers indicateurs de l'éventuelle présence de « lésions physiologiques » et de leurs localisations. Par exemple, une tension artérielle élevée pourrait être attribuée à une « lésion physiologique » du tronc cérébral (cf. § IV. A. 2.2. a. *La voie cortico-réticulo-spinale*).

A travers un « examen neurologique fonctionnel », différentes structures et fonctions neurologiques sont ensuite évaluées à l'aide d'une batterie de tests principalement issus de la neurologie conventionnelle (cf. Tableau 3). Toutefois, certains tests comme le « *blind spot* » apparaissent propres à la NF et, de manière générale, un même test peut être utilisé pour évaluer plusieurs structures ou fonctions pour lesquelles ils ne sont habituellement pas utilisés en médecine conventionnelle.

Ainsi, si la démarche 'diagnostique' en NF ressemble fortement à celle employée en médecine conventionnelle, l'interprétation des éléments récoltés en est généralement éloignée. Aussi, ces tests peuvent être utilisés sans indication apparente. Par exemple, des tests cérébelleux peuvent être effectués dans le cas d'une lombosciatique d'origine mécanique [103].



Tableau 3. Procédures diagnostiques utilisées en Neurologie Fonctionnelle selon quatre sources d'informations incluses dans une *scoping review* à propos de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte chiropratique (tableau original) [77]

Structure(s) or function(s)		Sources of information			
		Book	Scientific articles	Websites	Interviews
Spinal nerve	Sensory	Spinothalamic tract* Dorsal columns**	Spinothalamic tract* Dorsal columns**	X	X
	Motor	Myotomes Muscle tone	Myotomes	Myotomes	X
	Reflexes	Osteotendinous Plantar Superficial abdominal	Osteotendinous Plantar	X	Osteotendinous
Cranial nerves		I to XII	At least, II to VIII, X to XII	At least, III, IV, VI, and VIII	I to XII
Vestibulo-cerebellar		Eye movements CN II, III, V, VII and, VIII to XII Romberg / Fukuda tests Finger-to-nose / Heel-to-shin tests Rapid alternative movements Vestibulo-ocular reflex Balance assessment Tandem gait Walking on toes / heels	Eye movements Finger-to-nose / Heel-to-shin tests Rapid alternative movements Vestibulo-ocular reflex Balance assessment Functional Romberg test	Eye movements Balance assessment	Eye movements Romberg / Fukuda tests Vestibulo-ocular reflex Balance assessment
Brain lobe(s)		Eye movements Blind spot mapping qEEG	Eye movements Blind spot mapping Gait assessment	Eye movements Blind spot mapping	Eye movements Blind spot mapping



		Finger dexterity Muscle testing Primitive reflexes Dual mental tasking		
Basal ganglia	Looking for fascial tics	Colored lenses	NM	X
Autonomic	Observation (e.g. pupillary size, condition of the skin) Pupil light reflex Blood pressure Forehead / tympanic temperatures Heart rate Respiratory rate / ratio Oximetry Bowel auscultation Dermographia Vein-to-artery ratio of the retinal vessel	Blood pressure Heart rate Heart auscultation “Respiratory excursion” Vein-to-artery ratio of the retinal vessel Search for dermographia	X	Pupillary size or pupil light reflex Blood pressure Heart rate Oximetry
Cognitive	Questions about patient’s orientation and for testing memory	Wechsler intelligence scale for children Test of variables of attention Finger tapping test Cognitive tasks (e.g. memory tasks)	X	Test of variables of attention

*This includes nondiscriminative touch, temperature and pain sensations. / Inclut le tact protopathique ainsi que la sensibilité thermo-algique

**This includes fine touch, and conscious proprioception. / Inclut le tact épicrotique ainsi que la proprioception consciente

X: Structure(s) or function(s) mentioned without specific example(s) / Structure(s) ou fonction(s) mentionnée(s) sans exemple(s) spécifique(s)

NM: Structure(s) or function(s) not mentioned in the source / Structure(s) ou fonction(s) non mentionnée(s) par la source d’informations

qEEG: Quantitative electroencephalography / Electroencéphalographie quantitative



Les modalités thérapeutiques (informations issues des quatre sources)

Les modalités thérapeutiques utilisées en NF sont nombreuses (cf. Tableau 4). Les quatre sources sur lesquelles nous nous sommes appuyés indiquent qu'une approche personnalisée est privilégiée. Celle-ci consiste généralement en une combinaison de plusieurs modalités, plus particulièrement en des stimuli à visée neurologique, de nature variée, associés ou non à des conseils nutritionnels et/ou des compléments alimentaires.

Les stimuli sont choisis en fonction de la localisation des « lésions physiologiques » identifiées et donc du potentiel qu'ils auraient à 'rétablir' une quantité de stimulations adéquate dans ces zones 'lésées' (cf. § IV. A. 2.2. a. *Le concept de « lésion physiologique »* et § IV. A. 2.2. a. *La place de manipulation vertébrale*). Les modalités thérapeutiques mentionnées par nos quatre sources d'informations sont répertoriées dans le Tableau 4, en fonction des zones 'lésées' qu'elles stimuleraient.

Le but du traitement en NF est de 'rétablir' un « état d'intégration centrale » optimal des différents groupes de neurones identifiés comme 'dysfonctionnels'. Cela doit conduire à 'l'amélioration' ou au 'rétablissement' de la communication entre les différentes parties du système nerveux qui, pour rappel, est désignée en NF comme responsable de symptômes lorsque celle-ci est perturbée (cf. § IV. A. 2.2. a. *Le concept de « lésion physiologique »*). Les modalités composant le traitement de NF devraient être répétées de manière suffisante afin de favoriser des changements neuroplastiques bénéfiques.

D'autres règles devraient être suivies au risque de définitivement 'détruire' les neurones 'dysfonctionnels' [102, 103]. Par exemple, (i) la quantité et l'intensité des stimuli dispensés devraient être adaptées au niveau de « fatigabilité » du groupe de neurones ciblé, plus un groupe de neurones serait « fatigable » moins il supporterait des stimulations intenses et répétées, et (ii) les stimuli choisis devraient être dispensés que d'un seul côté, i.e. ipsilatéral ou controlatéral aux 'lésions', en fonction de la voie neurologique ciblée.



Tableau 4. Modalités thérapeutiques utilisées en Neurologie Fonctionnelle selon quatre sources d'informations incluses dans une *scoping review* à propos de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte chiropratique (tableau original) [77]

Sources of information		Conditions or signs	Tissues at fault	Therapeutic modalities	Specific comments	General comments
Book	Chap.19	Migraines and vertigo	Right cerebral hemisphere	SMT Eye exercises Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		Most of the treatment modalities (e.g. SMT, sound therapy, eye exercises) are provided or performed to the opposite side of the targeted hemisphere. Nutritional therapy consists mainly of vitamin B, omega 3 and COQ10 supplementation.
		Complex regional pain syndrome	Cerebral hemisphere(s)	Joint manipulations Counting backwards Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy Hot and cold compresses Orthotics	The targeted hemisphere is probably the left because counting backwards is said by the author to stimulate the left cerebral hemisphere.	
		Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder	Right cerebral hemisphere and left cerebellum	Joint manipulations Sound therapy Spatial rearrangement exercises Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		
		Depression	Cerebral cortex	Joint manipulations Sound therapy Spatial rearrangement exercises Looking at old photos and making up stories about them Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		
		Low back pain with spinal root compression	Right cerebral hemisphere	Joint manipulations Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		



		Post SMT symptoms	Right cerebral hemisphere and left vestibulo-cerebellar system	Joint manipulations Soft tissue and trigger point therapy Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		
Chap.20	NA*	Cerebral hemisphere	<p>Activation: Any complex chore Manipulative therapy Eye exercises Cerebellar activation Sensory stimuli: visual, auditory, olfactory Transcutaneous electrical neural stimulation</p> <p>Inhibition: Earplugs, blinders Visualize rather than perform activities Evoked potentials at reduced amplitude</p>	<p>Some specific stimuli to stimulate the right and the left cerebral cortex are described. Moreover, some specific stimuli directed for the different lobes of the hemispheres are also described [39].</p> <p>Stimuli directed to the cerebellum are described below.</p>	*In Chap. 20, the author does not deal with conditions but only with targeted neurological structures.	
	NA*	Cerebellum	<p>Manipulative therapy Warming the auditory canal Revolving chair Eye movements Passive muscle stretch Squeezing a ball Pointing</p>	Specific exercises to stimulate the medial part and the lateral part of the cerebellum are also proposed [39].		
	NA*	Vestibule	<p>Cawthorne-Cooksey exercises Balance exercises</p>	For details concerning these exercises, see [39].		
	NA*	Brainstem	Smell and/or taste food	Specific exercises to stimulate the		



				Exercises and/or stimuli of muscles innervated by cranial nerves Rectal dilation	mesencephalon are also mentioned [39].	
		NA*	Sympathetic activity	Local application of warm Transcutaneous electrical neural stimulation	These modalities are described to inhibit the sympathetic activity.	
		NA*	Caudate nucleus	Visualizing pleasant stimuli	In contrast, amygdala and/or hippocampus may be stimulated by visualizing unpleasant stimuli and “narrative recall” and list learning.	
Scientific articles	Carrick (1997)	Enlarged physiological blind spot**	Cerebral hemisphere	SMT		In the articles listed here, the large majority of the therapeutic modalities, i.e. manipulation, vibration therapy, eye exercises, and mirror therapy, are provided or performed depending on the targeted structure(s) and its/their side(s), except in the articles of Pedro (2005) (where this is not mentioned) and of Hirsh (2013) (where this is only mentioned for vibration therapy). **These studies were conducted on healthy subjects who were found with an enlarged blind spot of one of their eyes.
	Pedro (2005)	Landau-Kleffner syndrome	Left hemisphere and right cerebellum	Manipulation Eye movement exercises Visual, olfactory, auditory, vestibular and somatosensory stimuli Interactive metronome Nutrition therapy	There was no precision of which modalities would alter one of the two targeted structure rather than the other.	
	Daubeny (2010)	Enlarged physiological blind spot**	Cerebral hemisphere	Upper extremity manipulations		
	Bova (2013)	Cervical dystonia	Left cerebral cortex (frontal lobe)	Eye movement exercises		
			Right cerebellum	SMT Vibration therapy		
			Right vestibular system	Eye movement exercises		
Left basal ganglia			Eye movement exercises Vibration therapy Blue-lensed glasses			
Kuhn (2013)	Migraines, attention deficit and hyperactivity	Right cortical hemisphere	SMT Coordination activities			



		disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and Tourette's syndrome		associated with eye movements Interactive metronome	
			Left cerebellum	SMT Coordination activities associated with eye movements Interactive metronome	
			Right basal ganglia	SMT Coordination activities associated with eye movements Interactive metronome	
			Left pons	SMT Coordination activities associated with eye movements	
	Hirsh (2013)	Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, primary nocturnal enuresis and musculoskeletal pain	Right cortical hemisphere and left cerebellum	SMT Blue-lensed-glasses Optokinetic stimulation Vibration therapy Balance exercises Vestibular stimulation Timing exercises, including interactive metronome Home exercises: inhibitory of primitive reflexes, muscles strengthening, and balance exercises. Dietary changes	There was no precision of which modalities would alter one of the two targeted structure rather than the other.
	Esposito (2013)	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury	Cortex (including frontal lobe)	Off-axis rotational device	Other modalities are used (see App.3a) without clear mention of which neurological areas are targeted.
Vestibule			Off-axis rotational device		
Right lower brainstem			Off-axis rotational device		



			Left upper brainstem	Off-axis rotational device		
			Superior colliculi	Red-blue-lenses		
	Bova (2014)	Parkinson's disease	Cerebral cortex	SMT Cross crawl exercises Mirror therapy	Cross crawl exercises are performed to stimulate the frontal lobe.	
			Basal ganglia	Vibration therapy Blue-lensed glasses Mirror therapy	Mesencephalon was also targeted without any mention of what modalities were used for.	
	Bova (2014)	Idiopathic hemiparesis	Left cerebral cortex (parietal lobe)	Vibration therapy	SMT and cold laser therapy were also used.	
			Left vestibular system	Eye exercises		
	Traster (2014)	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury	Left cerebral hemisphere	Manipulative therapy Passive complex movements of the extremities Eye movement therapies Earth-vertical axis rotations	Breathing exercises were also given to the patient.	
			Left brainstem (including the left superior colliculus)	Optokinetic stimulations		
			Overall vestibule	Eye movement therapies Earth-vertical axis rotations		
Websites	Website 4	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injuries	Vestibular system	Off-axis rotational device		The content of each treatment is individualized, following the statements of the five websites. All of the practitioners resort to eye exercises



						and to home exercises and/or lifestyle counseling, especially concerning nutrition (see App. 3b).
Interviews	Informant 1	NA	Temporal lobe(s)	Riding a bike		The content of each treatment is described as individualized.
	Informant 2	NA	Cerebral hemisphere	Manipulative therapy		
		Symptoms following traumatic brain injuries	Brainstem	Somatosensory evoked potential		
	Informant 3	NA	Cerebral hemisphere	Manipulative therapy	Coordination exercises and exercises for fine motor skills are performed to stimulate the lateral part of the cerebellum.	All the informants resort to home exercises. The majority of them use manipulative therapy and eye exercises (see App. 3c).
NA		Cerebellum	Manipulative therapy Coordination exercises Exercises for fine motor skills			

SMT: Spinal manual therapy / Manipulation vertébrale

NA: Not applicable / Non applicable



Les plans de traitement (informations issues des articles scientifiques, des sites internet et des interviews)

Le nombre de visites, leur fréquence ainsi que la durée initiale du traitement apparaissent également personnalisés. Cependant et indépendamment du motif de consultation en NF, il semblerait que plusieurs visites par semaine voire plusieurs sessions de traitement par jour soient initialement proposées aux patients et que la durée initiale de traitement soit généralement supérieure à deux semaines (cf. *Table 5* de l'article en Annexe 1). Le peu d'informations collectées concernant une éventuelle stratégie thérapeutique à moyen ou long terme en NF ne nous ont pas permis d'avoir un aperçu suffisant sur ce point.

Les résultats obtenus ou escomptés (informations issues des quatre sources)

Nos quatre sources d'informations rapportent une amélioration voire une résolution complète des symptômes pris en charge, sans forcément que nous puissions connaître le délai dans lequel ces résultats avaient été obtenus ou pouvaient être escomptés (cf. *Table 6* de l'article en Annexe 1). L'auteur du manuel, RW Beck, rapporte pour différents cas des résultats favorables après 12 semaines de traitement (nombre de visites et fréquence ne sont pas précisés) [103]. Les auteurs des neuf études de cas rapportent également des résultats favorables pour différentes conditions et symptômes à différents intervalles [92-96]. Dans trois de ces études de cas une amélioration du patient à moyen [86] ou plus long terme [83, 88] est indiquée (cf. *Table 6* de l'article en Annexe 1). Aucun essai contrôlé randomisé capable de confirmer ces différents résultats positifs n'a été obtenu à travers notre recherche bibliographique.



Synthèse intermédiaire des résultats relatifs à la 1^{ère} contribution scientifique

A l'issue de cette *scoping review*, il apparaît que la NF est en effet fondée sur des concepts théoriques inhabituels, notamment celui de « lésion physiologique ». La détection, l'évaluation et la prise en charge de « lésions physiologiques », c'est à dire de groupes de neurones 'dysfonctionnels', constituent l'essence de cette approche thérapeutique conservatrice ; ces dernières seraient responsables d'un important nombre de symptômes. Un « examen neurologique fonctionnel » est nécessaire afin de détecter et d'évaluer ces 'lésions', la plupart des éléments de cet examen sont issus de la médecine conventionnelle mais leur interprétation est généralement propre à la NF. Le fait que cette approche serait indiquée pour un très large panel de conditions et symptômes est également confirmé au terme de cette revue ; elle serait aussi indiquée pour améliorer les performances de personnes en bonne santé.

Cette première contribution scientifique nous apprend que la MV a une place particulière au sein de la NF puisqu'il lui est attribué des bénéfices cliniques via une action sur l'activité cérébrale. De nombreuses autres modalités thérapeutiques sont utilisées par les « neurologues fonctionnels » afin de 'stimuler' diverses parties du système nerveux, principalement des zones cérébrales. La prise en charge initiale d'un patient en NF apparaît généralement individualisée et intensive ; elle conduirait à une amélioration voire une résolution complète des symptômes via des changements neuroplastiques bénéfiques qu'induirait le traitement de NF. Ces résultats reposent uniquement sur les témoignages de thérapeutes ou, au mieux, sur des études de cas.



B. Revue critique de la littérature : Décrire les preuves scientifiques disponibles concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle à partir des publications obtenues via le journal scientifique *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*.

Si à l'issue de la *scoping review* les concepts fondamentaux de la NF nous ont paru, au moins pour certains, biologiquement peu plausibles et propres à cette approche (e.g. le concept « d'hémisphéricité »), il n'en restait pas moins possible que la NF puisse bénéficier de preuves en faveur de son efficacité. En effet, si la première revue avait pu s'appuyer, pour ce qui est de la littérature scientifique, quasi exclusivement sur des études de cas, celle-ci avait été limitée à un contexte chiropratique. Par ailleurs, à travers cette même revue, les modalités thérapeutiques utilisées en NF ont été identifiées comme nombreuses et de nature très diverse. Ainsi, afin de décrire les preuves scientifiques disponibles concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF, il nous a semblé pertinent d'élargir nos recherches à des approches de NF n'incluant pas forcément d'éléments habituellement utilisés en chiropraxie, en procédant cette fois à une évaluation de la qualité méthodologique de la littérature.

La recherche bibliographique conventionnelle d'articles scientifiques portant sur la NF s'étant précédemment avérée laborieuse et infructueuse, nous avons limité nos recherches au journal FNRE. Pour rappel, cette revue scientifique nous avait été conseillée comme source d'informations par un chercheur activement impliqué en NF, G Leisman, également rédacteur en chef de ce journal. Il s'agit du journal affilié à l'IAFNR mentionné dans le cadre théorique (cf. § II. C. 3.3.).

Objectifs de recherche

Les objectifs de recherche de cette revue critique de la littérature sont les suivants :

- 1) Déterminer la proportion d'articles pouvant être considérés comme des articles de recherche parmi les écrits contenus dans le journal FNRE.
- 2) Déterminer, parmi ces articles de recherche, la proportion d'articles portant sur des études annonçant étudier ou paraissant étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une approche de NF.
- 3) Décrire, à partir des articles obtenus via le journal FNRE, quelles indications proposées et interventions de NF ont fait l'objet de recherches.



4) Déterminer si le schéma d'étude et la méthodologie des études rapportées dans ces articles sont appropriés pour étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention.

5) Décrire les preuves scientifiques disponibles concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF à partir des publications issues d'une recherche bibliographique dans le journal FNRE.

NB : Afin de rendre plus agréable la lecture de ce manuscrit, seuls la méthode et les résultats des trois derniers objectifs seront rapportés ci-dessous. Nous invitons le lecteur à se référer à l'article situé en Annexe 2 pour ce qui est de la méthode et des résultats concernant les deux premiers objectifs de recherche de cette revue.

1. Méthode

Une revue critique de la littérature obtenue à partir d'une recherche bibliographique effectuée dans l'ensemble des numéros du journal FNRE a été réalisée (enregistrée sous la référence CRD420180818662 dans le registre PROSPERO). Nous avons sélectionné les articles en appliquant très peu de critères d'exclusion concernant les schémas d'études utilisés, et ce, afin de permettre aux publics ciblés (cliniciens et futurs cliniciens) de comprendre les principaux prérequis méthodologiques nécessaires pour pouvoir conclure à l'efficacité propre d'une intervention. Ce choix rend cette revue critique de la littérature atypique, notamment à la lecture de sa section Méthode.

1.1. Stratégies de recherche et critères d'éligibilité des articles

Stratégies de recherche

Une recherche bibliographique a été effectuée dans l'ensemble des numéros du journal FNRE (n=24) dans le but d'identifier les articles portant sur des études annonçant étudier ou paraissant étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention de de NF. Ces numéros du journal FNRE avaient été édités entre 2011 et 2016. Au moment où nous avons effectué cette recherche bibliographique, aucun numéro ne semblait avoir été édité avant 2011 ou après 2016. La plupart des numéros de ce journal contiennent une section intitulée « *IAFNR News and Events* » dans laquelle une liste de références de manuscrits d'articles soumis et d'articles publiés dont les auteurs sont ou étaient membres de l'IAFNR est



disponible. Ces listes ont également fait l'objet d'une recherche bibliographique ; seuls les titres des articles déjà publiés ou acceptés pour publication ont été considérés.

Critères d'éligibilité

Critères d'éligibilité concernant les 3^e et 4^e objectifs de recherche

Pour rappel, le troisième objectif de recherche était de décrire quelles indications proposées et interventions de NF ont fait l'objet de recherches. Le quatrième objectif de recherche était de déterminer si le schéma d'étude choisi et la méthodologie utilisée dans les articles d'intérêt étaient appropriés afin d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention.

Une intention claire de la part des auteurs des articles d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention de NF devait être identifiée. Pour cela, des termes tels que « *effect(s)* », « *effectiveness* », « *improvement(s)* », « *improve* », « *recover* », « *recovery* », or « *benefit(s)* » ont été recherchés dans les articles. Dans un premier temps et afin de remplir le quatrième objectif de recherche de cette revue, nous n'avons pas appliqué de critères restreignant le type de schéma d'étude, à l'exception du fait que les études de cas ne pouvaient pas être incluses. Les études de cas avaient déjà été exclues lors d'une étape précédente relative au premier objectif de recherche.

L'intervention de NF devait être clairement identifiée en tant que telle, le journal FNRE n'ayant pas uniquement la NF parmi ces objectifs de publication. L'intervention pouvait avoir été testée sur tous types de sujets, symptomatiques ou non, sans restriction concernant le type de symptômes et leur durée. Ces critères d'éligibilité peu restrictifs concernant l'intervention et le type de sujets ont été établis sur la base des résultats de la *scoping review* précédemment réalisée.

La sélection des articles à partir des titres, des résumés puis des textes intégraux a été faite par les deux auteurs de la revue (ALM et CLY), de manière indépendante.

Critères d'éligibilité concernant le 5^e objectif de recherche

Dans un second temps et afin d'être en mesure de décrire les faits scientifiques concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF à partir des publications obtenues via le journal FNRE (notre cinquième objectif de recherche), les articles devaient porter sur des études prospectives comprenant au moins un groupe contrôle.

Une étude était considérée comme investiguant un éventuel *effet* d'une intervention de NF si celle-ci était comparée (i) à une intervention de type placebo ou (ii) à une intervention dont l'efficacité



avait déjà été établie contre placebo. Les études prospectives avec un autre type de groupe contrôle (e.g. groupe contrôle sans aucune intervention, ou sujet à une autre intervention dont l'efficacité restait à établir) étaient considérées comme investiguant un éventuel *bénéfice* d'une intervention de NF.

Ces études pouvaient comporter ou non une allocation randomisée des sujets dans les différents groupes d'étude.

1.2. Extraction des données et évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études

Deux tableaux ont été créés : un premier pour l'extraction des informations descriptives relatives aux articles inclus (cf. Tableau 6 ci-après, ou *Table 1* de l'Annexe 2) et un second relatif à l'évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études y étant rapportées (cf. Tableau 7). Ce dernier a été organisé en deux parties. Une première partie concerne l'ensemble des articles inclus et ne comporte qu'un seul item, celui-ci consistant à se prononcer sur le fait que le schéma des études était ou non potentiellement approprié pour étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention. Lorsque le schéma d'une étude était potentiellement approprié à cet effet, sa qualité méthodologique était évaluée dans la seconde partie de ce tableau. Dans le cas contraire, des recommandations succinctes étaient émises dans le but de favoriser l'usage de schémas d'études appropriés à cet effet.

Les items ayant servi à évaluer la qualité méthodologique des études rapportées dans les articles inclus dans la seconde partie de ce tableau sont les suivants (cf. Tableau 7) :

- 1) Les sujets d'étude sont-ils dits 'en aveugle' de l'intervention testée et/ou naïfs ? (biais de performance / de suivi)
- 2) La répartition des sujets d'étude dans les différents groupes est-elle rapportée comme ayant été réalisée de façon aléatoire (randomisation) ? Si oui, une assignation secrète est-elle rapportée ? (biais de sélection)
- 3) L'intervention testée est-elle suffisamment bien décrite ? (critère de validité externe)
- 4) Le ou les critère(s) de jugement est-il / sont-ils rapporté(s) comme étant reproductible(s) ou fiable(s) ? (erreur aléatoire)



5) La personne évaluant le ou les critère(s) de jugement est-elle dite ‘en aveugle’ de l’intervention administrée ? (biais de détection / de mesure)

6) La personne ayant effectué les analyses statistiques est-elle dite ‘en aveugle’ de l’intervention administrée ? (biais d’analyse)

7) Les auteurs rapportent-ils les sujets perdus de vue et/ou exclus de l’étude ou, cela est-il évident dans la section résultats ? (biais d’attrition)

Ainsi, ces items devaient principalement permettre d’évaluer le risque de biais de ces études (i.e. items 1, 2, et 5-7). Ces derniers sont pour la plupart comparables à ceux communément évalués dans le cadre d’essais cliniques randomisés, tels que ceux recommandés, par exemple, par l’organisation Cochrane [104]. Un critère de validité externe (i.e. item 3) ainsi que la possibilité de survenue d’une erreur aléatoire (i.e. item 4) complétaient l’évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études incluses. Les raisons pour lesquelles l’ensemble de ces critères ont été choisis sont indiquées dans l’unique appendice de cette revue (cf. Annexe 2).

A l’issue de l’évaluation méthodologique, un score sur 8 ou 9 points a été calculé pour chacune des études. Ce score tenant compte du fait que certains critères n’étaient pas pertinents pour certaines études (cf. Tableau 7), celui-ci a été transformé en un pourcentage afin de faciliter la comparaison de la qualité méthodologique des articles inclus. Aucune limite d’acceptabilité des études évaluées n’a été déterminée ; le score de qualité méthodologique a été utilisé pour apprécier de manière globale la rigueur méthodologique de chacune d’elles.

L’extraction des données descriptives et l’évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études ont été réalisées par les deux auteurs de la revue (ALM et CLY) de manière indépendante. Le contenu des tableaux relatifs à la description et à la qualité méthodologique complétés par ces deux auteurs a ensuite été comparé. En cas de désaccord, les points de divergences étaient discutés afin de mener à un consensus. La sollicitation d’une tierce personne s’est avérée nécessaire pour essayer de terminer le schéma d’étude utilisé dans deux expérimentations issues d’un même article [105]. L’extraction des données descriptives et l’évaluation de la qualité méthodologiques ont été faites à partir des informations contenues dans l’intégralité des articles, à l’exception de leur section Discussion et de leur Résumé.

Initialement, un troisième tableau destiné à présenter une synthèse des résultats rapportés dans les articles inclus dans le cadre de notre cinquième objectif de recherche devait être créé. Cependant, en



raison de la faible qualité méthodologique des études, nous avons fait le choix de ne pas nous y attarder. Ces résultats n'ont ainsi été que très sommairement mentionnés dans une des parties de la section Résultats (cf. IV. B. 2.3. b.).

1.3. Synthèse et analyse des données

Les deux tableaux mentionnés ci-dessus ont permis d'effectuer une synthèse narrative des informations pertinentes pour les objectifs de recherche 3 à 5 de cette revue. Un tableau complet relatif aux éléments descriptifs des articles inclus est disponible en Annexe 2 (cf. *Table 1*) et une version synthétique de celui-ci est proposée ci-après (cf. Tableau 6). Le tableau relatif à l'évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des articles est également disponible ci-après (cf. Tableau 7).

2. Résultats

NB : Le lecteur est invité à se référer à l'Annexe 2 pour des résultats plus détaillés et, notamment, les résultats se rapportant aux premier et deuxième objectifs de recherche de cette revue.

2.1. Informations générales

Neuf articles satisfaisant les premiers critères d'éligibilité établis ont été obtenus [91, 105-112], dont cinq publiés dans le journal FNRE et quatre issus des listes de références des sections « *IAFNR News and Events* ». Ces neuf articles avaient été publiés entre 2006 et 2015. Trois auteurs ont été identifiés comme ayant plus particulièrement contribué aux neuf articles inclus : G Leisman est co-auteur de cinq articles, FR Carrick et R Melillo sont tous deux co-auteurs de quatre articles.

Les objectifs de recherche des études rapportées dans ces neuf articles ne sont pas toujours clairement énoncés et la section Introduction de ces articles est parfois confuse. Un des articles issus du journal FNRE s'est finalement avéré comme ne répondant pas strictement à nos critères d'éligibilité. Après consensus entre les deux auteurs (ALM et CLY), il a été conservé car jugé pertinent dans le cadre de cette revue critique [110]. Toutefois, comme indiqué dans le Tableau 5, une intension claire d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention de NF de la part des auteurs des articles inclus a été identifiée.



Tableau 5. Tableau mettant en évidence l'intention d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention de la part des auteurs de neuf articles inclus dans une revue critique de la littérature à propos du *bénéfice* ou *effet* de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle (tableau original) [78]

1st Author Year Journal	Signs that authors intended to study effect or benefit (non-exhaustive list of concerned article sections and examples, limited to two examples per publication)
Malkowicz 2006 Intern J Neuroscience	-Introduction/Objective "...the authors were particularly interested in studying the effects of an intensive visual stimulation treatment program on visual recovery." (p.1018) -Discussion "...it can be seen that visual stimulation programs improve a brain-injured child's ability to see significantly more than that of an individual not receiving visual stimulation." (p.1032)
Daubeny 2010 Int J Disabil Hum Dev	-Title " Effects of contralateral extremity manipulation on brain function" -Discussion "The Sham manipulation did not have such an effect supporting that observations that it is the manipulation itself that is causing the changes in brain function." (p. not available)
Leisman 2010a Int J Disabil Hum Dev	-Title " Effects of motor sequence training on attentional performance in ADHD children" -Abstract "Rhythm feedback training appears to have a significant effect on clinically observed changes in behavior in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder..." (p.275)
Leisman 2010b Int J Adolesc Med Health	-Title "The effect of hemisphere specific remediation strategies on the academic performance outcome of children with ADD/ADHD" -Discussion "We here attempted a pilot study to determine if treatment that is preferentially aimed at a hypothesized interactive right hemisphere in ADD/ADHD children would have an effect on their sensory motor performance, as well as on cognitive function related to attention focus." (p.281)
Carrick 2011 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title "The effects of whole body rotations in the pitch and yaw planes on postural stability" -Results "To investigate the effects of the Rotation, one tailed t-test for paired observations with..." (p.174)
Castellanos * 2012 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title " Restoring the brain entropy and complexity after rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury" -Discussion "After rehabilitation, the local networks recover , understanding recovery as an approach to control values of organization." (p.212)
Carrick 2013 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title "The effect of off vertical axis and multiplanar vestibular rotational stimulation on balance stability and limits of stability" -Method "To evaluate the effects over time the rotational stimulation could have on the balance of the subjects, each..." (p.347)
Sullivan 2013 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Introduction/Objective "Our task was to investigate the effectiveness of this simple, non-invasive, low-cost and readily available bedside therapy." (p.94) -Discussion "..., it would seem unlikely that the observed effects are due particularly to stimulation of..." (p.102)
Bousquet 2015 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title "The perceived effects of hemisphere integration therapy on students with identified right hemisphere weakness" -Conclusion "Before this study, there was no research regarding the effects of HIT on students with ASD." (p.292)

*Cet article n'a finalement pas été considéré comme étudiant un *bénéfice* / *effet*.

Seuls les auteurs d'un article rapportent avoir obtenu l'accord d'un comité d'éthique [110] et, dans trois autres articles, les auteurs mentionnent avoir obtenu l'accord d'une commission scientifique d'évaluation (« *review board* ») [105, 106, 109]. Concernant d'éventuels conflits d'intérêts, la plupart des auteurs ne rapportent aucune information à ce propos [105-107, 111, 112]. Les auteurs



de deux des articles signalent un conflit d'intérêts [108, 109] et ceux de l'article restant signalent ne pas en avoir [91]. Toutefois, des potentielles sources de conflits d'intérêts, non déclarées par les auteurs, ont été identifiées pour cinq des neuf articles (cf. *Table 1*, col. 8 de l'Annexe 2).

De manière générale, le schéma des études rapportées dans les neuf articles inclus n'est pas approprié pour étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention. Les études rapportées dans les quatre articles pour lesquels une évaluation méthodologique plus complète a été effectuée se sont avérées être de faible voire de très faible qualité méthodologique, leur score de qualité méthodologique n'atteignant jamais 50% des points pouvant être attribués (cf. Tableau 7).

2.2. Description des indications proposées et interventions de Neurologie Fonctionnelle ayant fait l'objet de recherches (3^e objectif de recherche) (n=9)

Les études incluses avaient été conduites sur des sujets symptomatiques (n=6) ou asymptomatiques (n=3), adultes (n=5) ou enfants / adolescents (n=4). Le nombre de sujets dans chaque étude est variable, compris entre 12 et 122. Les indications proposées à une intervention de NF sont diverses, bien que certaines ont été étudiées à plusieurs reprises comme indiqué dans le Tableau 6 (e.g. les troubles neurodéveloppementaux).



Tableau 6. Tableau de synthèse concernant les données descriptives relatives à neuf articles inclus dans une revue critique de la littérature à propos du *bénéfice* ou de l'*effet* de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle [78]

1^{er} Auteur Année	Indication(s) proposée(s) (sujets adultes ou enfants / adolescents)	Intervention (modalité(s) unique ou multiples)	Schéma d'étude*
Leisman 2010a	Troubles neurodéveloppementaux** (enfants / adolescents)	« <i>Motor sequence training</i> » (unique)	Essais contrôlés randomisés ^(?)
Leisman 2010b		« <i>Hemispheric specific remediation program</i> » (multiples)	Etude avant/après ^(?)
Bousquet 2015		« <i>Hemispherique integration therapy</i> » (multiples)	
Malkowicz 2006	Déficience visuelle d'origine corticale (enfants / adolescents)	Programme visuel intensif (unique)	Etude cas témoins (avec groupe contrôle externe)
Carrick 2011	Sujets sains (amélioration de l'équilibre) (adultes)	« <i>Whole-body rotation</i> » (unique)	Etude avant/après
Carrick 2013			Essai contrôlé randomisé ^(?)
Daubeny 2010	Sujets sains (amélioration de la « fonction cérébrale ») (adultes)	Manipulation articulaire (unique)	Essai contrôlé randomisé
Castellanos 2012	Traumatismes crâniens (adultes)	Programme de neuroréhabilitation (multiples)	Etude avant/après (avec groupe contrôle de sujets sains, non soumis à l'intervention testée)
Sullivan 2013	Migraine (adultes, incluant un sujet adolescent)	« <i>Pneumatic ear insufflation</i> » (unique)	Série de cas (prospective, comprenant 3/13 sujets également soumis à une intervention placebo)

*Les schémas d'études indiqués en gras sont ceux ayant été considérés comme (potentiellement) appropriés pour étudier un *bénéfice* ou un *effet*.

^(?) Incertitude. Se référer au Tableau 7 pour davantage de détails à propos des schémas d'études.

** Deux de ces études ont inclus les sujets sur la base d'un 'diagnostic' « d'hémisphéricité » dans le cadre de ces troubles, 'diagnostic' propre à la Neurologie Fonctionnelle.

Les interventions de NF testées sont également diverses et consistent, en général, en une ou plusieurs modalités, de nature variée, destinée(s) à stimuler différentes zones du cerveau. L'intervention testée pouvait être personnalisée. Les différentes interventions sont répertoriées dans le Tableau 6 et davantage d'informations sont disponibles à ce sujet dans le tableau descriptif d'origine (cf. *Table 1* de l'Annexe 2). Il n'était cependant pas toujours évident d'identifier le contenu exact ainsi que le nombre et la fréquence de ces interventions en raison d'un manque de détails de la part de certains auteurs [107, 110]. Dans l'ensemble des articles, les critères de jugement avaient été évalués pré- et post-intervention, à différents intervalles post-intervention (cf. *Table 1* de l'Annexe 2).



2.3. Principales considérations à propos du schéma d'étude et de la méthodologie des études rapportées dans les articles inclus (4^e objective de recherche) (n=9)

Le quatrième objectif de recherche de cette revue consistait à déterminer si le schéma d'étude et la méthodologie des études rapportées dans les articles inclus étaient appropriés afin d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention (cf. Tableau 7, col. 1).

a. Schémas d'études ne permettant pas d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention (n=5)

Cinq études ont été considérées comme ayant un schéma d'étude non approprié afin d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention [106, 108-110, 112]. Trois d'entre-elles ne comportent pas de groupe contrôle [108, 109, 112], une est rétrospective avec un groupe contrôle non-concomitant [106] et une autre s'intéresse aux mécanismes d'action de l'intervention testée plutôt qu'à son *bénéfice* ou à son *effet* [110]. Cette dernière avait été conduite selon un schéma d'étude peu commun, celui-ci consistant à comparer un groupe de sujets ayant subi un traumatisme crânien auquel une intervention est administrée à un groupe de sujets sains auquel aucune intervention n'est administrée ; les critères de jugement post-intervention du premier groupe étaient alors comparés à ces mêmes critères évalués chez les sujets sains.

Le schéma exact d'une des études sans groupe contrôle [108] n'a pas pu être déterminé sur la base de son texte intégral (cf. Tableau 7) et celle-ci ne pouvait pas être considérée comme une étude pilote (schéma indiqué par les auteurs de cet article). En effet, une étude pilote n'a normalement pas pour objectif de se prononcer sur l'efficacité d'une intervention [113].



Tableau 7. Evaluation de la qualité méthodologique de neuf articles inclus dans une revue critique de la littérature à propos du *bénéfice* ou de l'*effet* de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle (tableau original) [78]

1st Author Year Journal Score of methodological quality	All studies included		Clinical research studies with appropriate or potentially appropriate study design to investigate an effect or benefit of Functional Neurology approach						
	-Design -Design appropriate to investigate effect or benefit of intervention?	If design was not appropriate, major methodological considerations ("NA" for appropriate or potentially appropriate study design)	Were study subjects stated to be: -Blind to treatment allocation? (NA if no sham) -Naïve to types of intervention?	-Was a random allocation reported? -Was it stated that this was concealed? (NA if no random allocation)	Were interventions well described?	Was the assessor reported to be blind?	Outcome measure reported to be reliable or reproducible?	Was the person who analyzed the data stated to be blind?	Were losses or exclusions reported or obvious in results, tables or graphs?
Malkowicz 2006 Intern J Neuroscience NA	Retrospective study of clinical database with external control group (from previously published study) -No	In order to investigate the effect of intervention, it would be necessary to include a concomitant control group to ensure that the two groups are similar and assessed at similar interval(s).							
Daubeny 2010 Int J Disabil Hum Dev 4/9 (44%)	-Randomized controlled trial -Yes	NA	-No -No	-Yes -No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes



Leisman 2010a Int J Disabil Hum Dev 2/8 (25%)	-Two randomized controlled trials (?) -Yes	NA	-NA -No	-Yes -No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Leisman 2010b Int J Adolesc Med Health NA	-Case series from multiple clinics (?) or Multicenter outcome study (*) -No	In order to investigate an effect, a control group would be needed.							
Carrick 2011 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon NA	-Outcome study -No	In order to investigate an effect or benefit, a control group would be needed.							
Castellanos 2012 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon NA	-Outcome study with healthy untreated control group at baseline -No	In order to investigate effect or benefit, a similar control group subjected to another intervention would be needed.							
Carrick 2013 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon 2/8 (25%)	-Four arms randomized trial (?) -Potentially	NA	-NA -No	-Yes -No	Yes	No	No	No	No



Sullivan 2013 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon 2/8 (25%)	-Prospective case series with sham treatment in 3/13 cases -Potentially	NA	-No -No	-No -NA	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Bousquet 2015 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon NA	-Outcome study -No	In order to investigate an effect, a control group would be needed.							

NA: Non-applicable

(?): Incertitude

*Rapportée comme étant une étude pilote par ses auteurs mais utilisée pour conclure à propos de l'effet d'une intervention de NF. Le fait que plusieurs centres aient participé à l'étude n'est pas clair.



b. Schémas d'études permettant (potentiellement) d'étudier le bénéfice ou l'effet d'une intervention (n=4)

Daubeny et al. 2010 [91] _ **score de qualité méthodologique de 4/9 soit 44%** (Tableau 7, ligne 3) : Dans cet essai contrôlé randomisé, l'effet de la manipulation articulaire sur la taille du « *blind spot* » (cf. IV. A. 2.2. a.) est étudié contre placebo. Un changement significatif de la taille du « *blind spot* » en fonction du côté où la manipulation est dispensée est rapporté pour le groupe intervention mais pas pour le groupe contrôle. Cependant, aucune mention n'est faite par les auteurs de cette étude concernant la reproductibilité ou la fiabilité de ce critère de jugement, i.e. le « *blind spot* ». Par ailleurs, la validité du « *blind spot* » en tant que mesure de l'activité cérébrale a été remise en question [114-117]. Le fait que les sujets de l'étude étaient ou non 'en aveugle' de l'intervention reçue n'est pas précisé. Aussi, leur origine n'est pas mentionnée, ne permettant pas de savoir s'ils avaient ou non un quelconque intérêt quant aux résultats de l'étude. D'autres problèmes méthodologiques apparaissent à la lecture du Tableau 7, ligne 3. En résumé, la validité des résultats de cet essai contrôlé randomisé apparaît incertaine.

Leisman et Melillo 2010a [107] _ **score de qualité méthodologique de 2/8 soit 25%** (Tableau 7, ligne 4) : Les auteurs de cette article rapportent, a priori (le schéma d'étude exact restant à déterminer), les résultats de deux essais contrôlés randomisés consistant en (i) un groupe d'enfants, tous de sexe masculin, diagnostiqués comme ayant un trouble de l'attention avec hyperactivité (TDAH) recevant ou ne recevant pas l'intervention testée (i.e. « *motor sequence training* ») et (ii) un second groupe d'enfants, d'âges similaires et également tous de sexe masculins, qualifiés de « normaux », eux-aussi recevant ou ne recevant pas cette même intervention. En raison de résultats rapportés de manière sommaire, nous n'avons pas été en mesure d'identifier de quelle façon ces quatre groupes d'enfants avaient été comparés. De manière générale, peu d'informations concernant la méthodologie suivie au cours de cette étude sont rapportées. Par exemple, il n'est pas précisé si les différents acteurs de l'étude étaient ou non 'en aveugle'. Le fait que les enfants avec TDAH du groupe intervention bénéficiaient ou non d'une prise en charge concomitante ou que les enfants TDAH du groupe contrôle bénéficiaient ou non d'une quelconque prise en charge (autre que l'intervention) n'est par ailleurs pas précisé. D'autres problèmes méthodologiques apparaissent à la lecture du Tableau 7, ligne 4.

Carrick et al. 2013 [105] _ **score de qualité méthodologique de 2/8 soit 25%** (Tableau 7, ligne 8) : Les résultats de deux expérimentations à la méthodologie identique sont rapportés dans cet article. Seuls les critères de jugement sont différents d'une expérimentation à l'autre, il s'agit



de deux types de variables visant à évaluer la posture. Ces deux expérimentations consistent à évaluer l'équilibre de sujets asymptomatiques en réponse à différents positionnements de la tête avant et après avoir été soumis à des rotations dans différents plans de l'espace via un dispositif appelé « *whole body rotation* ».

Dans chacune de ces expérimentations, les sujets étaient initialement répartis en quatre catégories en fonction de leur 'profil postural'. Ensuite, les sujets de chacune de ces catégories étaient répartis de manière aléatoire dans quatre groupes, chacun des groupes correspondant à une combinaison différente de plans de stimulation via le dispositif « *whole body rotation* ». Chaque sujet pouvait être soumis à une stimulation dans des plans de l'espace (i) 'correspondant' totalement, (ii) et (iii) 'correspondant' partiellement, ou (iv) ne 'correspondant' pas du tout à son 'profil postural'. Tous les groupes étaient donc soumis à une intervention.

Il paraît difficile d'effectuer une intervention placebo pour simuler l'intervention testée dans cette étude. Cependant, la comparaison à un autre type d'intervention ou, à minima à un groupe semblable soumis à aucune intervention, aurait permis d'étudier un éventuel *bénéfice*. Une autre possibilité aurait été de tester si, en fonction des plans de la stimulation, i.e. 'correspondant' totalement, partiellement ou pas du tout au 'profil postural', les réactions posturales post-intervention différaient, et ce, d'une manière logique (e.g. amélioration de la posture dans le cas où la stimulation 'correspond' / est 'adaptée' au 'profil postural'). En fait, le schéma d'étude de ces deux expérimentations laisse penser que c'est potentiellement ce que les auteurs ont testé / ont voulu testé.

Ce type de comparaison aurait pu nous informer sur la pertinence ou non-pertinence de l'évaluation posturale effectuée ainsi que de l'intervention testée, celle-ci visant à améliorer l'équilibre des sujets. Cependant, aussi bien à la lecture des objectifs de recherche, de la méthode, que des résultats de ces expérimentations, il n'est pas clair que les auteurs aient en effet effectué ce type de comparaison. Il nous a semblé que les auteurs auraient simplement procédé à des comparaisons avant/après 1) pour chaque groupe de stimulation indépendamment du fait que cette stimulation (i) 'corresponde', (ii) et (iii) 'corresponde' partiellement, ou (iv) ne 'corresponde' pas au 'profil postural' des sujets inclus dans ces groupes et 2) pour chaque catégorie de 'profil postural' indépendamment du fait que la stimulation (i) 'corresponde', (ii) et (iii) 'corresponde' partiellement, ou (iv) ne 'corresponde' pas à ce 'profil postural'. Cette situation équivaldrait à avoir effectué plusieurs études avant/après et non pas deux essais contrôlés randomisés.

Par ailleurs, la reproductibilité ou la fiabilité de la méthode d'évaluation posturale n'était pas rapportée par les auteurs et il n'était pas possible de savoir si la personne en charge de cette



évaluation avant/après était ‘en aveugle’. D’autres problèmes méthodologiques apparaissent à la lecture du Tableau 7, ligne 8.

Sullivan 2013 [111] _ **score de qualité méthodologique de 2/8 soit 25%** (Tableau 7, ligne 9) : L’auteur de cette série de cas prospective est aussi le thérapeute ayant dispensé l’intervention (i.e. « *pneumatique ear insufflation* ») et le placebo ainsi que la personne en charge de recueillir les valeurs du critère de jugement (i.e. intensité de la douleur) avant, pendant et après intervention ou placebo. Dix des treize sujets inclus ont été soumis uniquement à l’intervention et seuls trois des treize sujets ont été soumis aux deux conditions, i.e. l’intervention et le placebo, sans randomisation. Ainsi, cette étude, bien que prospective et incluant un groupe contrôle, ne peut pas être considérée comme permettant d’investiguer l’*effet* d’une intervention. D’autres problèmes méthodologiques apparaissent à la lecture du Tableau 7, ligne 9.

2.4. Description des preuves scientifiques à propos du *bénéfice* ou de l’*effet* de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle (n=4)

Seulement quatre articles ont été considérés comme, au moins en partie, capables de nous apporter des éléments de réponse quant aux preuves scientifiques disponibles à propos d’un éventuel *bénéfice* ou *effet* d’une intervention de NF. L’évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études rapportées dans ces articles a abouti à des scores de qualité méthodologique faibles voire très faibles, compris entre 25% et 44%, indiquant un risque général de biais substantiel. Les principaux risques de biais identifiés concernaient (i) l’insu des sujets, (ii) de l’évaluateur et (iii) de la personne en charge de l’analyse statistique, et (iv) l’assignation secrète des sujets dans les groupes d’étude (cf. Tableau 7). Aussi, il n’était jamais spécifié si le critère de jugement utilisé était reproductible ou fiable, ne permettant pas d’exclure que certains résultats puissent être expliqués par une variabilité inhérente au critère de jugement choisi.

Du fait des nombreuses limitations méthodologiques présentées par les études examinées, la validité de leurs résultats respectifs nous est apparue incertaine. Il ressort de cette revue critique de la littérature qu’aucune preuve scientifique probante concernant un potentiel *bénéfice* ou *effet* de la NF n’est disponible à travers les publications obtenues via le journal FNRE.



Synthèse intermédiaire des résultats relatifs à la 2nde contribution scientifique

Seuls cinq articles publiés dans le journal FNRE ont été identifiés comme portant sur des études annonçant étudier ou paraissant étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF. Quatre autres articles répondant à cette même description ont été obtenus via la section « *IAFNR News and Events* » des numéros de ce journal, portant à neuf le nombre d'articles inclus dans cette revue critique de la littérature. Les études rapportées dans ces neuf articles avaient été menées sur différents types de sujets ou patients, enfants ou adultes, avec ou sans symptômes (de nature variée), et diverses modalités thérapeutiques y avaient été testées.

Malgré une apparente volonté d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une approche de NF de la part des auteurs des articles inclus dans cette revue, les études y étant rapportées avaient soit été conduites selon des schémas d'études non appropriés à cet effet et/ou ont été évaluées comme étant de faible voire de très faible qualité méthodologique. Aucune évidence scientifique probante concernant l'éventuel *effet* ou *bénéfice* de la NF n'a pu être trouvée à travers une recherche bibliographique effectuée dans le journal FNRE, ce pour diverses indications proposées.



C. Revue systématique critique de la littérature : Déterminer si la manipulation vertébrale a un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale* et, si oui, si celui-ci s'accompagne d'un *effet clinique* chez des sujets sains et/ou chez des sujets symptomatiques.

La *scoping review* nous a permis d'identifier les concepts fondamentaux de la NF dans un contexte chiropratique. Afin de continuer à nous situer dans ce contexte, il nous a semblé pertinent de nous intéresser à l'évidence scientifique susceptible de confirmer le rôle attribué en NF à la MV. Pour cela, une revue systématique critique de la littérature a été réalisée, celle-ci avait pour but de déterminer si la MV a un *effet clinique* via un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale* chez des sujets sains et/ou chez des sujets symptomatiques. Cette revue est actuellement à l'état de manuscrit, celui-ci sera prochainement soumis au journal scientifique à comité de lecture *Chiropractic & Manual Therapies*. Sa version intégrale est disponible en Annexe 3 de la thèse.

Questions de recherche

Les questions de recherche de cette revue sont les suivantes :

A propos des études ayant comparé la MV à une intervention de type placebo :

- 1) La MV a-t-elle un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale* ?
- 2) Si la MV a un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*, quelle est la durée de cet *effet* ?
- 3) Si la MV a un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*, celui-ci est-il associé à un *effet clinique* ?

A propos des études ayant comparé la MV à un autre type de contrôle (à un 'contrôle inactif' ou à un 'autre type de stimulus physique') :

- 4) Un *changement d'activité cérébrale* est-il rapporté après MV vs. après une intervention contrôle inactive ?
- 5) Un *changement d'activité cérébrale* est-il rapporté après MV vs. après une autre forme de stimulus physique ?



1. Méthode

Une revue systématique critique de la littérature a été réalisée (enregistrée sous la référence CRD42017074966 dans le registre PROSPERO). En réponse au contenu des articles inclus dans la revue, notamment aux types de sujets d'étude, des déviations par rapport au protocole initial nous sont apparues nécessaires. Celles-ci sont précisées dans le manuscrit de la revue (cf. Annexe 3).

1.1. Stratégies de recherche, critères d'éligibilité et sélection des articles

Stratégies de recherche

Une recherche bibliographique a été effectuée en avril 2017 puis actualisée entre janvier et février 2018 à partir d'un moteur de recherche et de deux bases de données respectivement PubMed, Embase et PEDro. En collaboration avec une bibliothécaire spécialisée, une équation de recherche a été développée pour une recherche à partir de PubMed (cf. *Appendix 1* de l'Annexe 3) puis, celle-ci a été adaptée pour les bases de données Embase et PEDro. La stratégie de recherche associait (i) des termes se rapportant à la MV (e.g. « manipulation, spinal », « HVLA »), (ii) des termes se rapportant à des structures cérébrales (e.g. « cerebrum », « brain », « cerebellum ») et (iii) des termes se rapportant aux différents moyens d'explorations de l'activité cérébrale (e.g. « transcranial magnetic stimulation », « electroencephalography »).

Critères d'éligibilité

Les études devaient comporter au moins un groupe contrôle, elles pouvaient avoir été réalisées selon un plan d'étude croisé. La répartition dans les différents groupes d'étude pouvait ou non avoir été faite de manière aléatoire.

Les études devaient avoir été menées sur des humains, sans autre restriction concernant les sujets d'étude. Autrement dit, aucune restriction concernant l'âge, le sexe et le type de symptômes n'a été appliquée. Les sujets pouvaient aussi être sains, i.e. sans problème de santé connu.

L'intervention testée devait consister en une ou plusieurs MV, délivrée(s) manuellement (i.e. manipulation dite de haute vélocité et de faible amplitude) ou mécaniquement assistée(s). Les sujets du groupe contrôle pouvaient être soumis à (i) une intervention de type placebo, (ii) aucune



intervention (type de contrôle que nous avons qualifié d'inactif) ou, (iii) un autre type de stimulus physique, celui-ci devant être autre qu'une MV. Les études comportant une intervention combinée ou concomitante à la MV ne pouvaient pas être incluses sauf si les différents groupes de l'étude étaient soumis à cette même intervention combinée ou concomitante.

Le ou les critère(s) de jugement utilisé(s) devait / devaient être explicitement indiqué(s) par les auteurs des articles comme ayant été choisi(s) pour évaluer une forme d'activité cérébrale. Aucune autre restriction n'a été appliquée concernant le type de critères de jugement et aucune restriction n'a été appliquée concernant les outils de mesure utilisés.

Il n'y avait pas de restriction concernant la date de publication des articles. Ces derniers devaient avoir été rédigés en anglais ou en français.

Sélection des articles

Sur la base de ces critères d'éligibilité, une sélection à partir des titres a été effectuée par le premier auteur du manuscrit de la revue (ALM), ce à deux reprises. Ce même auteur a également effectué une recherche parmi les titres des listes de références des articles inclus. Les critères d'éligibilité ont ensuite été appliqués de manière indépendante par deux des auteurs (ALM et CLY) aux résumés et aux textes intégraux.

1.2. Extraction des données

Les données d'intérêt ont été extraites uniquement des sections Méthodes et Résultats des articles inclus dans la revue.

a. Données descriptives

Les principales données descriptives des études rapportées dans les articles inclus ont été collectées de manière systématique et indépendante par deux des auteurs (ALM et CLY) dans des tableaux créés à cet effet (cf. *Tables 1a-c* de l'Annexe 3). Leurs contenus ont ensuite été comparés.

Un tableau descriptif par type de sujets d'étude a été complété, les sujets ayant été classifiés



en (i) sujets symptomatiques, (ii) sujets sains, et (iii) sujets présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques ». Si la définition de cette dernière catégorie de sujets n'est pas consistante d'un article à l'autre, ces sujets ont généralement été décrits comme présentant « une histoire de douleurs ou de tensions intermittentes, localisées au niveau du rachis et/ou du bassin, et présentant une ou plusieurs dysfonctions articulaires au niveau de ces mêmes régions » [118]; ces dysfonctions articulaires faisant référence au concept de « subluxation chiropratique », tel que défini par ces mêmes auteurs [119-123]. Certains auteurs ajoutent que ces sujets ont la caractéristique de ne pas encore avoir cherché à bénéficier de soins pour ces douleurs / tensions intermittentes. Ainsi, ces sujets ne nous ont paru ni symptomatiques ni sains et, nous avons fait le choix de classer les sujets non pas en deux mais en trois catégories.

b. Données relatives à la qualité méthodologique

L'évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études incluses a consisté en deux aspects : (i) une évaluation 'standard' des risques de biais habituellement susceptibles d'être rencontrés dans les études investiguant l'efficacité d'une intervention (cf. items 1-4 et 6-8 des Tableaux 8a-e) ainsi que d'un critère de validité externe (cf. item 5 des Tableaux 8a-e) et (ii) une évaluation de certains aspects techniques spécifiques aux différents outils de mesure et/ou critères de jugement utilisés dans les articles inclus (cf. *items 6 et 7 des Tables 2a-e* de l'Annexe 3). Les dix items utilisés afin d'évaluer la qualité méthodologique des études rapportées dans les articles inclus ont été sélectionnés selon leur pertinence au regard du sujet de cette revue ainsi que sur la base des études obtenues via la recherche bibliographique effectuée, c'est à dire essentiellement des études expérimentales dans lesquelles aucun critère de jugement clinique n'avait été étudié. L'ensemble de ces items ainsi que les raisons pour lesquelles ils ont été choisis sont détaillés en Annexe 3 (cf. *Appendix 2*).

Concernant l'évaluation de l'aspect technique des études incluses, plusieurs personnes ont été invitées à prendre part au processus, y compris pour déterminer les aspects techniques pertinents à prendre en compte ; toutes disposent d'une expertise pour un ou plusieurs des outils de mesures utilisés. Chacune des personnes sollicitées, co-auteurs du manuscrit (MAA, MS et PS), a évalué les études dans son ou ses domaine(s) d'expertise et, l'une d'elle (MAA), disposant d'une expertise en statistiques, a passé en revue l'ensemble des analyses statistiques des études. Ces mêmes auteurs (MAA, MS et PS) ont également été invités à apporter des commentaires à propos des aspects techniques et statistiques des études lorsqu'ils le jugeaient pertinent. Une synthèse de ces commentaires a été faite et a été insérée



dans les tableaux de qualité (cf. *Tables 2a-e, col.12* de l'Annexe 3).

Chaque item de qualité a été évalué de manière indépendante par au moins deux auteurs de la revue. Leurs évaluations respectives étaient ensuite comparées. Il était prévu que les éventuels désaccords soient résolus par discussions entre les auteurs.

NB : L'évaluation des aspects techniques de certains articles est actuellement en cours. Ainsi, seuls les résultats issus de l'évaluation des risques de biais associée à l'évaluation d'un critère de validité externe seront rapportés dans cette thèse.

c. Données relatives aux résultats

Les résultats des études incluses dans l'analyse finale de cette revue ont été rapportés dans trois tableaux (cf. Tableaux 9a-c), un par type de contrôle, i.e. 'placébo', 'contrôle inactif', et 'autre type de stimulus physique'. L'intervention contrôle était considérée (i) comme un 'contrôle inactif' quand celle-ci n'impliquait pas à minima un contact manuel (e.g. sujets au repos) et (ii) comme un 'autre type de stimulus physique' quand celle-ci impliquait à minima un contact manuel (e.g. mise en tension d'une articulation, autre modalité de thérapie manuelle).

Sur les recommandations de Bland et Altman (2011) [124], nous avons prévu de prendre en compte uniquement les résultats issus de comparaisons inter-groupes (ou inter-interventions dans le cas des études conduites selon un plan d'étude croisé). Autrement dit, il avait été prévu de ne pas prendre en compte les résultats issus de comparaisons intra-groupes. Cependant, dans certaines études, les analyses statistiques se sont avérées atypiques et/ou leurs résultats avaient été rapportés de manière confuse ou incomplète. Pour cette raison, nous avons adopté une approche moins restrictive. Ainsi, nous avons également pris en compte les résultats rapportant des différences significatives post-intervention résultant *a priori* de comparaisons inter-groupes, à condition que ces différences variaient dans des sens opposés et que dans l'un des groupes d'étude la différence pré- post-intervention rapportée soit significative. Dans d'autres cas, où aucun des auteurs de la revue n'était en mesure de déterminer si les résultats avaient été obtenus via une analyse inter-groupes appropriée, nous avons également pris en compte ces résultats. Une approche au 'bénéfice du doute' des auteurs des articles inclus dans la revue a ainsi été privilégiée.

Seuls les critères de jugements principaux des études ont été pris en considération pour répondre aux



cinq questions de recherche de cette revue.

1.3. Classification des articles en fonction de leur qualité méthodologique

Pour chacun des articles, deux scores de qualité méthodologique ont été calculés, l'un se rapportant à l'évaluation des risques de biais et au critère de validité externe (cf. items 1-8 des Tableaux 8a-e) et l'autre se rapportant à l'évaluation des aspects techniques (cf. *items 6 et 7* des *Tables 2a-e* de l'Annexe 3). Un nombre de points a été attribué pour chaque item évalué, les scores pouvaient respectivement être au maximum de six à sept points et de trois points. La répartition de ces points est précisée en Annexe 3 (cf. *Appendix 2*). Comme précédemment mentionné, ce dernier score n'est pas encore disponible pour l'ensemble des études. Nous avons fait le choix de deux scores distincts afin d'indiquer que ces deux aspects peuvent être pris en considération dans ce type d'études afin d'en apprécier de manière plus complète la méthodologie.

Par ailleurs, étant donné qu'il n'est pas habituel de prendre en compte des aspects techniques dans l'évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études incluses dans une revue systématique critique de la littérature, seul le premier score a été utilisé afin de classer les articles. Ce score a été converti en pourcentage afin de faciliter la comparaison des articles. Ces derniers ont été arbitrairement classifiés comme étant de qualité méthodologique 'acceptable' (score compris entre 68% et 100%), 'moyenne' (score compris entre 34% et 67%) ou 'faible' (score compris entre 0% à 33%) (cf. Tableaux 8a-e, col. 1). Une fois l'évaluation de la partie technique des études terminée, le second score sera utilisé afin d'avoir un aperçu très général de la rigueur technique des études.

1.4. Analyse et synthèse des d'informations

Les différents tableaux ont été utilisés afin de rapporter de manière narrative les principaux résultats relatifs aux cinq questions de recherche de cette revue. La qualité méthodologique des articles a été prise en considération afin de savoir si nous pouvions accorder plus ou moins de confiance aux résultats rapportés dans les articles inclus.

2. Résultats

Les recherches bibliographiques électroniques et manuelles ont abouti à 1514 titres, parmi



lesquels 18 articles ont été inclus (cf. *Figure 1* de l'Annexe 3) [44, 118-123, 125-135]. Tous avaient été rédigés en anglais et publiés entre 2000 et 2018. Les auteurs de 11 des 18 articles inclus déclarent n'avoir aucun conflit d'intérêts [44, 118, 122, 123, 128-130, 132-135] alors que les autres articles ne contiennent aucune mention concernant la présence ou l'absence de conflit d'intérêts [119, 120, 125-127, 131].

2.1. Informations générales relatives aux études rapportées dans l'ensemble des articles inclus (n=18)

L'ensemble des données descriptives des études rapportées dans les articles inclus peuvent être consultées en Annexe 3 (cf. *Tables 1a-c*). Une synthèse des informations descriptives relatives à ces études est faite ci-dessous.

Toutes les études incluses sont des essais contrôlés contenant deux à trois groupes d'étude. Le nombre de sujets par étude est compris entre 10 et 72. Dix études avaient été conduites sur des sujets présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques » (toutes issues de groupes de recherche plus ou moins différents mais entourant systématiquement un même chercheur), quatre sur des sujets symptomatiques et quatre autres sur des sujets sains. Dans l'ensemble des articles un accord éthique est rapporté. Les auteurs d'un seul article ont rapporté les dates et la durée de collection des données [44].

La plupart des études avaient été conduites selon un plan d'étude croisé (n=10) et une randomisation avait été faite (n=14). L'intervention testée consistait généralement en une ou plusieurs MV de haute vélocité et de faible amplitude et trois études avaient choisi de tester les potentiels *changements* en réponse à une ou plusieurs manipulations dites mécaniquement assistées. Les MV étaient le plus souvent délivrées en termes de localisation et de nombre à la discrétion du ou des thérapeute(s). La plupart des études incluent un contrôle consistant en (i) un 'autre type de stimulus physique' (n=9) ou, (ii) un 'contrôle inactif' (n= 7). Seules trois études comparent la MV à une intervention de type placebo [44, 122, 135].

Les auteurs des articles inclus avaient fait le choix d'étudier les *effets* ou *changements* potentiellement induits par la MV sur l'activité cérébrale sous différents angles. Par exemple, certains auteurs se sont intéressés au traitement de l'information nociceptive par le cerveau alors que d'autres se sont intéressés à des réponses motrices pour lesquelles le cortex moteur est impliqué. Les critères



de jugement utilisés sont variables, 16 critères de jugement différents ont été dénombrés, certaines études ayant utilisé plusieurs critères. Ces critères de jugement sont décrits par les auteurs des articles inclus soit comme reflétant une forme d'activité cérébrale soit comme reflétant potentiellement une forme d'activité cérébrale, i.e. ces derniers n'étant pas exclusivement des indicateurs d'une forme d'activité cérébrale mais pouvant également indiquer une forme activité spinale (e.g. l'onde V, la période de silence corticale) [136, 137]. L'ensemble de ces critères de jugement sont brièvement décrits en Annexe 3 (cf. *Appendix 3*). Dans la plupart des études le critère de jugement avait été mesuré avant et après intervention sauf dans deux études où, pour des raisons apparemment éthiques, seule une mesure après intervention avait été effectuée [131, 134]. Le plus souvent, le critère de jugement avait été mesuré immédiatement, à un court intervalle de temps après intervention ou, à un intervalle de temps non précisé après intervention.

Les auteurs des quatre études conduites sur des sujets symptomatiques avaient également inclus un ou plusieurs critères de jugement cliniques (cf. *Table 1a* de l'Annexe 3) [44, 131, 133, 134]. Cependant, une potentielle relation entre (i) critères de jugement relatifs à une forme d'activité cérébrale et (ii) critères de jugement cliniques n'a été testée que dans deux de ces quatre études [131, 133]. Aucune de ces deux études avait comparé la MV à un contrôle de type placebo.

2.2. Extraction des données et évaluation de la qualité méthodologique des études rapportées dans l'ensemble des articles inclus (n=18)

Le processus d'extraction des informations n'a pas comporté de difficulté particulière, à l'exception de quelques points déjà évoqués. En effet, les analyses statistiques et les résultats de certaines études manquaient de clarté (cf. § IV. C. 1.2. c.) [44, 118, 121, 122, 127, 129, 130, 133]. De ce fait, de multiples discussions ont été nécessaires entre les différents auteurs afin de déterminer quels résultats de quelles études devaient être pris en compte afin de répondre aux cinq questions de recherche de cette revue de la littérature (cf. § IV. C. 1.2. c.).

2.3. Qualité méthodologique des études rapportées dans l'ensemble des articles inclus (n=18)

La plupart des études ont été considérées de 'faible' (n=7) ou 'moyenne' qualité méthodologique (n=8) (cf. Tableaux 8a-e, col.1 et Tableaux 9a-c). Les faiblesses méthodologiques les plus souvent rencontrées sont les suivantes : (i) incertitude concernant le maintien des sujets en insu de



l'intervention reçue ou insu des sujets non maintenu, (ii) absence d'information quant au fait que les sujets d'étude étaient ou non naïfs de l'intervention testée, (iii) absence d'information à propos de l'insu de la personne en charge de recueillir le(s) critère(s) de jugement, et (iv) absence d'information quant au fait que la personne en charge des analyses statistiques était ou non en insu.



Tableau 8a. Evaluation de la qualité méthodologique, score de qualité méthodologique et classification d'une étude, incluse dans une revue systématique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale, ayant utilisé le temps de réaction à une tâche de rotation mentale comme critère de jugement

1st Author Yr of publication Quality score (risk of bias, also including an external validity criteria) and classification	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes / unclear, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when crossover study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)
Kelly 2000 3.5/6 (58%) medium	NA	-Yes (but in relation to the outcome) -Yes -No = Unclear 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	NA (healthy subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt

NA : not applicable / non-applicable.



Tableau 8b. Evaluation de la qualité méthodologique, score de qualité méthodologique et classification de sept études, incluses dans une revue systématique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale, ayant utilisé des critères de jugement obtenus via stimulation magnétique transcrânienne

1st Author Yr of publication	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes / unclear, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when crossover study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)
Dishman 2002 2.5/6 (42%) medium	NA	-No -Yes -No = No 0pt	Unclear ("counterbalanced) 0.5pt	NA (healthy subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt
Haavik-Taylor 2007a 2/6 (33%) low	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects / crossover)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt
Dishman 2008 2/6 (33%) low	NA	-No -Yes -No = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (healthy subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt
Haavik-Taylor 2008 2/6 (33%) low	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects / crossover)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt



Fryer 2012 2.5/6 (42%) medium	NA	-No -Yes -No = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (healthy subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	Unclear 0.5pt	No 0pt
Haavik 2016 2/6 (33%) low	NA	-Unclear (most subjects were "novice to chiropractic") -No -NA = No 0pt	No 0pt	NA (SCP subjects / cross-over)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt
Baarbé 2018 3.5/6 (58%) medium	-Yes -No -NA = Unclear 0.5pt	NA	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt

NA : not applicable / non-applicable ; SCP : « subclinical neck/spinal pain » / « douloureux rachidiens subcliniques ».



Tableau 8c. Evaluation de la qualité méthodologique, score de qualité méthodologique et classification de quatre études, incluses dans une revue systématique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale, ayant utilisé les potentiels évoqués somesthésiques comme critère de jugement

1st Author Yr of publication	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes / unclear, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naïve? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when crossover study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)
Haavik-Taylor 2007b 2/6 (33%) low	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Unclear ("pseudo-randomized") 0.5pt	NA (SCP subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No (but data were coded by an independent person to reduce any bias during analysis) 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt
Haavik-Taylor 2010a 2.5/6 (42%) medium	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects / crossover)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No (idem Haavik-Taylor 2007b) 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt
Haavik-Taylor 2010b 2.5/6 (42%) medium	NA	-No -Yes -Unclear ("students and staff population at the University of Auckland") = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects / crossover)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No (idem Haavik-Taylor 2007b) 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt
Lelic 2016 2.5/6 (42%) medium	-Unclear (said to be naïve) -Yes -No (sham intervention was discovered as such by most of the subjects) = No 0pt	NA	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects / crossover)	-Yes 0.5pt -No 0pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt

NA : not applicable / non-applicable ; SCP : "subclinical neck/spinal pain"/ « douloureux rachidiens subcliniques ».



Tableau 8d. Evaluation de la qualité méthodologique, score de qualité méthodologique et classification de quatre études, incluses dans une revue systématique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale, ayant utilisé des critères de jugement obtenus via des techniques de neuroimagerie

1st Author Yr of publication Quality score (risk of bias, also including an external validity criteria) and classification	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes / unclear, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when crossover study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)
Ogura 2011 2/6 (33%) low	NA	-No -Yes -Unclear (recruited on the campus of Tohoku University) = No 0pt	Unclear ("counterbalanced") 0.5pt	NA (crossover)	-No 0pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt
Inami 2017 2/6 (33%) low	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (crossover)	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt
Gay 2014 5/7 (71%) acceptable	NA	-No -No -Unclear (recruited from the campus of the University of Florida and UF Health Hospital and the local community) = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt
Sparks 2017 5.5/7 (79%) acceptable	-Yes -No -NA = Unclear 0.5pt	NA	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt



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NA : not applicable / non-applicable.



Tableau 8e. Evaluation de la qualité méthodologique, score de qualité méthodologique et classification de deux études, incluses dans une revue systématique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale, ayant utilisé l'onde V comme critère de jugement

1st Author Yr of publication Quality score (risk of bias, also including an external validity criteria) and classification	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes / unclear, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when crossover study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)
Niazi 2015 2.5/6 (42%) medium	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -No 0pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt
Christiansen 2018 5/6 (83%) acceptable	NA	-No -Yes -Yes = Unclear 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	NA (SCP subjects)	-Yes 0.5pt -No 0pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt

NA : not applicable / non-applicable ; SCP : "subclinical neck/spinal pain"/ « douloureux rachidiens subcliniques ».



Les résultats de deux études ne sont de manière évidente pas issus de comparaisons inter-groupes [119, 120]. Dans une autre étude, la comparaison ne concerne pas les deux groupes d'étude mais les changements de potentiels évoqués moteurs mesurés au niveau de deux muscles dans chacun des groupes [127]. Ces trois études n'ont pas été prises en compte pour répondre à nos questions de recherche et leurs résultats n'ont pas été rapportés dans les tableaux de résultats.

Les auteurs de trois autres études ne rapportent pas les résultats issus d'au moins une des comparaisons inter-groupes annoncées [121, 122, 133]. Les résultats des critères de jugement concernés par cette absence d'information n'ont pas été pris en compte pour répondre à nos questions de recherche et n'ont pas été rapportés dans les tableaux de résultats, à l'exception des résultats de l'étude de Niazi et al. 2015 [121], ces derniers variant dans des directions opposées de manière significative dans les deux groupes que comporte l'étude.

Au total, 14 études ont été utilisées afin de répondre aux questions de recherche de la revue. Une de ces 14 études apparaît dans deux des trois tableaux de résultats (cf. Tableaux 9b et c) [128].

2.4. Réponses aux questions de recherche (n=14)

En raison de la diversité (i) des critères de jugement choisis, (ii) des protocoles expérimentaux utilisés pour un même critère de jugement et/ou (iii) des sujets d'étude, des comparaisons entre les différentes études incluses n'ont le plus souvent pas pu être faites, et ce, pour les trois types d'interventions contrôles (i.e. 'placébo', 'contrôle inactif' et 'autre stimulus physique'). Pour cette même raison et du fait de la qualité méthodologique des études, pour la plupart ayant été évaluées comme étant de 'faible' ou de 'moyenne' qualité méthodologique, la réalisation d'une ou plusieurs méta-analyse(s) s'est avérée non-pertinente.

Seule la synthèse des résultats se rapportant à chacun des types de contrôles est faite ci-dessous, particulièrement concernant les contrôles autres que 'placébo'. Des résultats plus détaillés sont disponibles en Annexe 3.



a. Réponses aux questions de recherche à propos des études ayant comparé la MV à une intervention de type placebo (n=3)

1) La MV a-t-elle un effet sur l'activité cérébrale ?

2) Si la MV a un effet sur l'activité cérébrale, quelle est la durée de cet effet ?

3) Si la MV a un effet sur l'activité cérébrale, celui-ci est-il associé à un effet clinique ?

Seulement trois études comparent la MV à une intervention de type placebo et ont donc été considérées comme potentiellement à même de nous fournir des réponses concernant les trois premières questions de recherche de la revue [44, 122, 135]. Cependant, nous avons considéré la crédibilité de l'intervention placebo comme incertaine pour deux de ces études (en raison de l'absence de questionnaire à l'issue de l'étude afin de s'assurer du maintien des sujets 'en aveugle') [44, 135] et l'intervention placebo a été découverte en tant que telle par la majorité des sujets dans la troisième [122]. De manière plus générale, deux de ces études ont été considérées de qualité méthodologique 'moyenne' [122, 135] et une de qualité méthodologique 'acceptable' [44] (cf. Tableaux 9a).

Celles-ci avaient été conduites sur des sujets présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques » (n=2) ou des sujets symptomatiques souffrant de cervicalgies non spécifiques aiguës ou subaiguës (n=1). Chacune avait utilisé un critère de jugement différent : l'amplitude du potentiel évoqué somesthésique N30 [122], l'amplitude du potentiel évoqué moteur décrit comme indicateur de l'inhibition cérébelleuse [135], et le niveau d'activation de différentes zones cérébrales en réponse à des stimuli douloureux (mesuré via l'imagerie par résonance magnétique) [44]. Ces critères de jugement avaient été mesurés pré- et post-intervention, à des intervalles de temps différents d'une étude à l'autre. Les auteurs de l'une d'entre elles n'ont pas indiqué le temps auquel le critère de jugement avait été mesuré post-intervention [122].

Deux de ces trois études n'avaient pas inclus de critère de jugement clinique et, alors qu'un critère de jugement clinique avait été inclus dans la troisième [44], une potentielle relation entre (i) critère de jugement relatif à l'activité cérébrale et (ii) critère de jugement clinique n'a pas été investiguée.

Synthèse des résultats à propos des études ayant comparé la MV à une intervention de type placebo (questions de recherche 1 à 3) (cf. Tableau 9a)

Trois études, deux considérées de qualité méthodologique 'moyenne' et une de qualité méthodologique 'acceptable', ont été prises en compte afin de répondre aux trois premières



questions de recherche de cette revue. Les auteurs de ces études rapportent un *effet* transitoire de la MV sur différentes formes d'activités cérébrales, allant d'immédiatement à 20 minutes post-intervention, chez des sujets présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques » (n=2) ainsi que chez des sujets symptomatiques (n=1). Les auteurs d'aucune de ces trois études n'ont testé une éventuelle relation entre l'*effet neurophysiologique* rapporté et un éventuel *effet clinique*.

Ainsi, aucune évidence n'a été trouvée à propos d'un potentiel *effet clinique* de la MV via un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*, ce quel que soit la forme d'activité cérébrale étudiée et le type de sujets d'étude.

Tableau 9a. Résultats issus de trois études comparant la manipulation vertébrale à une intervention de type placebo incluses dans une revue systématique critique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale (tableau original issu du manuscrit en Annexe 3)

1 st Author Year [Ref]	Type of study subjects	Outcome variable	Was a significant difference between treatment and sham groups observed?	Was there a relationship between brain changes and any clinical outcome?	Time of assessment	Quality classification
Sparks 2017 [44]	Symptomatic (mechanical neck pain < of 6 weeks of duration)	Blood oxygenation-level dependent signal (in response to noxious stimuli)	Yes (p < .05) Significant increase of activation in the insular and sensorimotor cortices in the SM group, and in the anterior and posterior cingulate, supplementary motor area, and precentral gyrus in the sham group	Pain intensity assessed but no relationship tested	Immediately after intervention	Acceptable
Lelic 2016 [122]	"Subclinical neck or spinal pain"	N30 somatosensory evoked potential peak amplitudes	Yes (p value between group not reported) Significantly decreased post-SM (p= .02) but no significant changes post-sham procedure (p= .4)	No clinical outcome included	Not reported	Medium
Baarbé 2018 [135]		Cerebellar inhibition	Yes (p < .001) Significantly reduced post-SM compared to sham intervention	No clinical outcome included	Unclear (according to Fig. 1 immediately after the motor acquisition task, i.e. about 20 min after intervention)	Medium

Les résultats sont rapportés (i) par type de sujets d'étude (symptomatiques ou présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques ») et (ii) consécutivement par ordre chronologique de publication.

SM : spinal manipulation / manipulation vertébrale.



b. Réponses aux questions de recherche à propos des études ayant comparé la MV à un autre type de contrôle (à un 'contrôle inactif' ou à un 'autre type de stimulus physique')

4) Un *changement d'activité cérébrale* est-il rapporté après MV vs. après une intervention contrôle inactive ? (n=7)

Synthèse des résultats à propos des études ayant comparé la MV à un contrôle inactif (cf. Tableau 9b)

Sept études, considérées de qualité méthodologique 'faible' (n=3) à 'moyenne' (n=4) (cf. Tableau 9b), comparent la MV à un contrôle inactif [125, 126, 128, 130-132, 134]. Les auteurs de chacune de ces sept études rapportent une différence significative inter-groupes (i.e. MV vs. 'contrôle inactif') pour au moins un des critères de jugement utilisés (cf. Tableaux 9b), ce quel que soit le type de sujets d'étude, i.e. sains (n=4), symptomatiques (n=2) ou, présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques » (n=1).

Les études ayant utilisé des critères de jugement communs sur des populations comparables, i.e. (i) l'amplitude de potentiels évoqués moteurs chez des sujets sains [126, 128, 132] et (ii) le taux d'activité métabolique de régions cérébrales chez des sujets souffrant de cervicalgies non spécifiques [131, 134], ont conduit à des résultats pour certains divergents, potentiellement pour des raisons de différences entre leurs protocoles expérimentaux respectifs (cf. Tableaux 9b).

5) Un *changement d'activité cérébrale* est-il rapporté après MV vs. après une autre forme de stimulus physique ? (n=5)

Synthèse des résultats à propos des études ayant comparé la MV à un autre type de stimulus physique (cf. Tableau 9c)

Cinq études, considérées de qualité méthodologique 'faible' à 'acceptable' (cf. Tableau 9c), comparent la MV à un autre type de stimulus physique [118, 121, 123, 128, 129]. Les auteurs de chacune de ces cinq études rapportent une différence significative inter-groupes (i.e. MV vs. 'un autre stimulus physique') pour au moins un des critères de jugement utilisés (cf. Tableaux 9c), ce chez des sujets sains (n=1) ou, le plus souvent, chez des sujets présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques » (n=4).



Un même critère de jugement a été utilisé dans deux de ces cinq études, toutes deux conduites sur des sujets présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques » [121, 123]. Leurs auteurs respectifs rapportent des résultats convergents.



Tableau 9b. Résultats issus de sept études comparant la manipulation vertébrale à un contrôle inactif incluses dans une revue systématique critique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale (tableau original issu du manuscrit en Annexe 3)

1 st Author Year	Type of study subjects	Outcome	Was a significant difference between groups observed?	Quality classification
Kelly 2000	Healthy	Mental rotation reaction-time task	Yes ($p < .05$) Significantly decreased post-SM compared to control	Medium
Dishman 2002		MEP amplitudes	Yes ($p < .05$) Significantly increased from 20 to 120 sec. post-SM compared to control	Medium
Dishman 2008		MEP amplitudes	Yes ($p < .05$) Significantly increased at 10s post-SM compared to control	Low
Fryer 2012		MEP amplitudes MEP latencies CSP durations	Yes ($p = .04$) Significantly decreased post-SM but no significant changes post-control No No	Medium
Ogura 2011	Symptomatic (mechanical neck pain and shoulder stiffness)	Regional cerebral metabolic rate	Yes ($p < .001$) Significantly increased post-SM compared to control in the inferior prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, and middle temporal gyrus; and significantly decreased post-SM compared to control in the cerebellar vermis and visual association cortex	Low
Inami 2017		Regional cerebral metabolic rate	Yes ($p < .05$) Significantly increased post-SM compared to control in the Broca's area, anterior cingulate cortex, somatosensory association cortex, Wernike's area, visual association cortex, cerebellar vermis, and visual cortex; and significant decreased post-SM compared to control in the inferior parietal lobule, frontal pole, inferior frontal gyrus, pars triangularis, premotor area/supplementary motor area, primary motor cortex, frontal eye field, dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, angular gyrus, fusiform gyrus, inferior temporal gyrus, and temporal pole.	Low
Haavik 2010b	"Subclinical neck or spinal pain"	P14-N18 SEP peak ratio N20-P25 SEP peak ratio P22-N30 SEP peak ratio	No No Yes ($p = .00005$) Significantly decreased post-SM and significantly increased post-control	Medium

Les résultats sont rapportés (i) par type de sujets d'étude (sains, symptomatiques ou présentant des "douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques"), (ii) par type de critère de jugement et (iii) consécutivement par ordre chronologique de publication.

CSP: *cortical silent period* / période de silence corticale; MEP: *motor evoked potential* / potentiel évoqué moteur; SEP: *somatosensory evoked potential* / potentiel évoqué somesthésique; SM: spinal manipulation / manipulation vertébrale.



Tableau 9c. Résultats issus de cinq études comparant la manipulation vertébrale à un autre type de stimulus physique incluses dans une revue systématique critique à propos de l'effet de la manipulation vertébrale sur l'activité cérébrale (tableau original issu du manuscrit en Annexe 3)

1 st Author Year	Type of study subjects	Outcome	Was a significant difference between groups observed?	Quality classification	
Dishman 2008	Healthy	MEP amplitudes	Yes ($p < 0.05$) Significantly increased at 10s post-SM compared to control	Low	
Haavik 2010a	"Subclinical neck or spinal pain"	P14-N18 SEP peak ratio	No	Medium	
		N20-P25 SEP peak ratio	No		
		P22-N30 SEP peak ratio	Yes ($p = .003$) Significantly decreased post-SM but no significant changes post-control		
Niazi 2015		V-wave amplitudes	Yes (p value between group not reported) Significantly increased post-SM ($p = .006$) and significantly decreased post-control ($p = .03$)		Medium
Christiansen 2018		V-wave amplitudes	Yes ($p < 0.01 - 0.03$) Significantly increased at each time point post-SM and significantly decreased at 30 and 60 min but not immediately post-control		Acceptable
Haavik 2016		MEP amplitudes	Yes ($p = .01$) Significantly increased post-SM but no significant changes post-control	Low	
		k (slope of the steepest part of the curve)	No		
		S50 (stimulus intensity to obtain a response 50% of the maximum)	No		

Les résultats sont reportés (i) par type de sujets d'étude (sains ou présentant des "douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques"), (ii) par type de critère de jugement et (iii) consécutivement par ordre chronologique de publication.

MEP: *motor evoked potential* / potentiel évoqué moteur; SEP: *somatosensory evoked potential* / potentiel évoqué somesthésique; SM: spinal manipulation / manipulation vertébrale.



Synthèse intermédiaire des résultats relatifs à la 3^e contribution scientifique

Dix-huit articles dont la plupart des études y étant rapportées ont été considérées de 'faible' (n=7) ou de 'moyenne' (n=8) qualité méthodologique ont été inclus dans cette revue systématique critique de la littérature. Les auteurs de ces études avaient investigué (i) si la MV a un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale* (MV vs. 'placébo') ou (ii) si la MV induit un *changement sur l'activité cérébrale* (MV vs. un 'contrôle inactif' ou un 'autre type de stimulus physique'), ce chez des sujets sains, symptomatiques ou présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques ». Les critères de jugement utilisés dans les études évaluées sont décrits comme reflétant ou reflétant potentiellement une forme d'activité cérébrale. Les résultats rapportés dans 14 de ces 18 articles ont été utilisés afin de répondre aux cinq questions de recherche de cette revue.

Dans 11 études, la plupart de qualité méthodologique 'faible' à 'moyenne', la MV est comparée à un 'contrôle inactif' ou à un 'autre type de stimulus physique'. Des *différences* significatives *a priori* inter-groupes sont rapportées dans l'ensemble de ces études, ce chez les trois types de sujets d'étude identifiés. Ces *changements* post-MV vs. post-contrôle ne concernent pas l'ensemble des critères de jugement utilisés dans ces études et, pour un même critère de jugement, ces *changements* avaient pour certains eu lieu dans des directions opposées d'une étude à une autre.

Dans trois études, deux de qualité méthodologique 'moyenne' et une de qualité méthodologique 'acceptable', la MV est comparée à une intervention de type placebo. Il en ressort que la MV aurait un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*, ce chez des sujets présentant des « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques » (n=2) ou chez des sujets souffrant de cervicalgies non-spécifiques aiguës ou subaiguës (n=1). Cet *effet* serait transitoire et son / ses bénéfice(s), aussi bien neurophysiologique(s) que clinique(s), reste(nt) à déterminer. En effet, aucune de ces trois études n'a étudié une potentielle relation entre *effet(s) neurophysiologique(s)* et *effet(s) clinique(s)* et la signification des *effets neurophysiologiques* rapportés dans ces trois articles reste, selon leurs auteurs, à l'état d'hypothèse. Aussi, le maintien des sujets 'en aveugle' de l'intervention testée est incertain pour deux de ces études et l'intervention placebo a été découverte en tant que telle par la majorité des sujets de la troisième études.

A l'issue de cette revue systématique critique, aucune évidence n'a été trouvée concernant un éventuel *effet clinique* de la MV via un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*.



V DISCUSSION GENERALE

Cette thèse avait pour but (i) de contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de ce qu'est la NF, telle que fondée et diffusée par FR Carrick auprès des chiropracteurs, et (ii) d'en évaluer la validité scientifique, plus particulièrement dans un contexte chiropratique, ce afin de tenter de statuer sur son caractère scientifique ou, au contraire, pseudoscientifique. Dans ce but, une *scoping review* et deux revues critiques de la littérature ont été réalisées.

A. Synthèse des résultats

A travers une *scoping review* incluant quatre sources d'informations, nous avons pu dresser un aperçu de ce qu'est la NF en termes de théorie et d'applications cliniques dans un contexte chiropratique. Il en ressort que la NF est décrite par ses praticiens comme une approche thérapeutique conservatrice pouvant être utilisée pour un large panel de conditions et symptômes, ainsi que pour optimiser les performances de personnes en bonne santé. Cette approche repose sur une théorie complexe, faite de concepts pour la plupart inhabituels, notamment celui de « lésion physiologique » du système nerveux.

Il apparaît également que si les « neurologues fonctionnels » empruntent de nombreuses étapes diagnostiques et de nombreux outils thérapeutiques à la médecine conventionnelle ainsi qu'à la chiropraxie telle que définie dans le cadre réglementaire français, leur interprétation ainsi que leur utilisation sont, en général, propres à la NF. Par exemple, la MV est utilisée en NF pour des troubles non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques, sur la base du postulat que celle-ci aurait un effet bénéfique sur l'activité cérébrale. Le traitement en NF consiste le plus souvent en la combinaison de divers stimuli, y compris la MV, et suit des règles elles-aussi propres à cette approche.

Indépendamment du motif de consultation en NF, des résultats thérapeutiques positifs sont décrits ou attendus. Ces résultats ont pour la plupart été observés à court terme et reposent sur les témoignages de thérapeutes ou sur des études de cas.

Deux autres revues nous ont permis d'évaluer, en partie, la validité scientifique de la NF. La première, une revue critique de la littérature, avait pour but de décrire les preuves scientifiques disponibles à propos du *bénéfice* ou de l'*effet* de la NF à travers l'évaluation d'articles obtenus via une recherche bibliographique effectuée dans un journal scientifique ayant parmi ses objectifs de publication des sujets de NF. La seconde, une revue systématique critique de la littérature, avait pour but de déterminer si, à travers la littérature scientifique, il est établi que la MV a un *effet sur l'activité*



cérébrale et, si oui, si celui-ci est corrélé avec un bénéfice clinique (postulat central de NF).

La revue critique de la littérature obtenue via le journal FNRE, portant a priori sur l'étude du *bénéfice* ou de l'*effet* de la NF, a abouti à la conclusion qu'aucune preuve scientifique probante à ce sujet n'est disponible à partir de cette source, ce pour diverses indications proposées et diverses interventions de NF. Par ailleurs, bien qu'ayant la NF parmi ses objectifs de publication, le journal FNRE ne contient que très peu d'articles portant sur des études visant a priori à investiguer le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de cette approche. Les neuf articles inclus dans cette revue présentent tous des problèmes majeurs de schéma d'étude et/ou de méthodologie ne permettant pas (i) soit d'étudier le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention (e.g. absence d'un groupe contrôle), (ii) soit de considérer avec confiance leurs résultats comme valides.

La revue systématique critique de la littérature à propos de l'*effet* de la MV sur l'activité cérébrale a montré que si des *effets* transitoires de différents types sont rapportés au niveau cérébral post-MV, leur pertinence, aussi bien neurophysiologique que clinique, reste à déterminer. Autrement dit, aucun *effet clinique*, bénéfique ou non, de la MV via un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale* n'a pu être identifié à travers les 18 articles inclus dans cette revue, ce quel que soit le type de sujets d'étude. Seulement trois études avaient comparé la MV à une intervention de type placebo et ont ainsi pu être utilisées afin de dresser cette conclusion. Deux d'entre-elles ont été considérées de qualité méthodologique 'moyenne' et l'une de qualité méthodologique 'acceptable'. Dans les 15 autres articles inclus, la MV avait été comparée à un contrôle autre qu'une intervention placebo ce qui ne permettait pas de conclure à un effet spécifique de la MV sur l'activité cérébrale. La plupart des études rapportées dans ces 15 articles ont été considérées de qualité méthodologique 'faible' ou 'moyenne'. Aussi, les *effets* ou *changements* rapportés avaient le plus souvent été mesurés immédiatement, à un très bref intervalle de temps ou, à un intervalle de temps non précisé post-intervention.

Ainsi, les deux revues critiques de la littérature que nous avons effectuées ont montré que peu de données scientifiques existent et que celles-ci ne permettent pas d'apporter des preuves scientifiques probantes concernant (i) le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF et (ii) l'un des postulats centraux de cette approche, celui-ci concernant la MV.

Nous expliquerons dans une des sections à suivre (cf. § V. B. 3.) pourquoi les résultats de ces trois revues nous amènent à penser que la NF, telle que fondée et diffusée par FR Carrick, au moins quand elle est utilisée dans un contexte chiropratique (i.e. incluant typiquement une ou plusieurs modalités de thérapies manuelles, particulièrement la MV), relève d'une pratique pseudoscientifique.



B. Discussion des résultats

1. La Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte chiropratique

A l'issue de la description des concepts fondamentaux de la NF, cette approche nous est apparue comme une alternative moderne et complexe au modèle historique de la « subluxation », tel que proposé par DD Palmer [59]. Selon ce dernier, la plupart des maladies ou des symptômes auraient une cause unique : la présence de « subluxations ». La 'correction' de ces « subluxations » à l'aide de la MV (ou ajustement vertébral) permettrait de remédier à ces maladies et ces symptômes. En NF, les « subluxations » ne sont plus à l'origine de la plupart des maladies ou des symptômes, elles sont remplacées par des « lésions physiologiques » du système nerveux. Elles aussi seraient réversibles, non plus uniquement via l'application d'ajustements vertébraux mais, entre autres, par l'application de divers stimuli à visée neurologique. Alors que le modèle de la « subluxation » est centré sur la colonne vertébrale, celui de la NF englobe l'ensemble du système nerveux avec une attention particulière sur le cerveau.

De la même façon que les partisans de ce modèle historique de la « subluxation », les « neurologues fonctionnels » proposent de prendre en charge un large panel de conditions et symptômes, nombreux étant non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques. L'application des concepts de NF est donc fortement susceptible de conduire à une pratique de la chiropraxie hors du cadre réglementaire régissant la profession, au moins au regard de la législation française la définissant comme une profession habilitée à prendre en charge les troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques [2]. Selon ce même cadre réglementaire, le chiropracteur doit prendre ses décisions cliniques sur la base des principes qui caractérisent une pratique fondée sur les preuves [2]. Cela implique la prise en compte des données les plus probantes issues de la littérature scientifique. Les résultats de nos trois revues ne permettent pas de décrire la NF comme une approche fondée sur les preuves, particulièrement en ce qui concerne l'utilisation de la MV. Ce constat contraste avec l'impression que donnent de nombreux praticiens et promoteurs de cette approche.

En effet, à l'issue de notre troisième contribution scientifique, aucune évidence scientifique n'a pu être trouvée concernant un *effet clinique* de la MV via un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*. Par ailleurs, il n'est pas certain que l'ensemble des *changements* rapportés après MV (i.e. MV vs. tous types d'interventions contrôles confondues), attribués à des *changements* au niveau cérébral, (i) reflètent en effet des *changements* au niveau cérébral, certaines variables ne reflétant pas uniquement des mécanismes neurophysiologiques supra-spinaux, (ii) représentent des *changements* neurophysiologiques bénéfiques pour le cerveau et (iii) soient spécifiques à la MV.



De manière plus générale, ce champ de recherche apporte actuellement très peu d'éléments permettant d'avancer à propos des connaissances se rapportant aux mécanismes d'action de la MV.

Ainsi, le postulat de NF consistant à désigner la MV comme un outil thérapeutique pouvant être bénéfique pour l'activité cérébrale, particulièrement susceptible de 'séduire' les chiropracteurs en raison de la place de la MV dans leur pratique [23], n'apparaît pas fondé sur des faits scientifiques probants. Il apparaît donc également qu'il n'y ait pas davantage d'évidence en faveur de l'utilisation de la MV dans le cadre du modèle proposé par les « neurologues fonctionnels » (i.e. MV utilisée seule ou de manière combinée à d'autres formes de stimulation) que dans le cadre du modèle historique de la « subluxation ».

2. La Neurologie Fonctionnelle dans un contexte plus général

La MV n'est pas la seule modalité thérapeutique utilisée par les « neurologues fonctionnels » afin de 'remédier' aux « lésions physiologiques ». Les résultats de notre deuxième revue de la littérature, non restreinte à un contexte chiropratique, ont cependant abouti à un constat similaire à celui concernant la MV : aucune preuve scientifique probante n'a pu être mise en évidence à propos du *bénéfice* ou de l'*effet* de la NF, et ce, pour différentes indications proposées et différentes modalités de NF. Toutefois, ces résultats sont issus d'une recherche bibliographique probablement non exhaustive à ce sujet puisque seule une recherche à partir du journal FNRE a été effectuée. Il reste donc possible que le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF ait été démontré à travers la littérature scientifique non couverte. Nous développerons ultérieurement cette limitation méthodologique (cf. § V. C. 2.1. b.).

Les conditions et symptômes qui constitueraient des indications à une approche de NF sont de nature très diverse et il s'agit essentiellement de conditions non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques, chroniques, pour lesquelles la médecine conventionnelle ne dispose pas encore de toutes les clés (e.g. maladie de Parkinson, troubles neurodéveloppementaux). Sur la base de nos deux premières revues, des résultats positifs voire une résolution de certains des symptômes caractéristiques de ces conditions sont rapportés. Cependant, ces résultats reposent (i) sur des témoignages de praticiens, (ii) sur des études de cas, ainsi que (iii) sur des études aux schémas et/ou à la méthodologie ne permettant pas de conclure à une efficacité propre de la NF pour les conditions ayant fait l'objet de ces témoignages ou rapportées dans ces études. Sur la base de témoignages ou d'études de ce type, de nombreux facteurs autres que l'intervention testée peuvent faire conclure à tort à son efficacité propre : le cours naturel d'une maladie [138, 139], des facteurs contextuels [138-140] et l'effet Hawthorne [139] en



sont des exemples. Le peu d'informations collectées concernant un éventuel *bénéfice* ou *effet* de la NF à long terme ne permettent pas non plus d'exclure que certains bénéfices rapportés soient le résultat de fluctuations normales, inhérentes à certaines conditions dont l'évolution est typiquement cyclique (e.g. migraines, troubles de l'humeur, sclérose en plaque).

Il est peu probable que les modalités thérapeutiques utilisées en NF puissent nuire physiquement aux patients. Cependant, l'éventualité qu'il puisse n'y avoir aucune preuve en faveur de leur efficacité propre lorsque celles-ci sont utilisées dans le cadre du modèle proposé en NF pose des problèmes éthiques. En effet, suivre un traitement de NF pourrait constituer une perte de temps voire une perte de chance pour le patient et un coût inutile, aussi bien pour le patient que pour la société. Tester l'efficacité propre de la NF à travers des études aux schémas robustes, de type essais contrôlés randomisés, avec comme comparateur une intervention placebo ou une intervention de référence pour une condition donnée, est donc un préalable nécessaire avant de proposer cette approche en tant qu'alternative thérapeutique aux nombreuses indications que les praticiens de NF lui attribuent. Ce type d'études fait défaut dans la littérature que nous avons couverte.

Faire preuve de rigueur méthodologique paraît d'autant plus nécessaire dans le cas de la NF que la théorie sur laquelle elle repose est peu plausible. En effet, et pour ne citer qu'un exemple, si de nombreux outils diagnostiques et thérapeutiques utilisés par les « neurologues fonctionnels » sont similaires à ceux utilisés en médecine conventionnelle, y compris en neurologie (e.g. le réflexe de Babinski, l'épreuve doigt-nez), leur interprétation et leur utilisation en sont généralement éloignées, propres à la NF. Par exemple, il n'est pas habituel de mesurer la tension artérielle d'un patient pour évaluer « l'état d'intégration centrale » de son tronc cérébral ou rechercher une « hémisphéricité » [99]. Il n'est pas non plus habituel de procéder à un examen neurologique cérébelleux face à une lombosciatique d'origine mécanique [103].

3. La Neurologie Fonctionnelle : approche scientifique ou pseudoscientifique ?

Dix « signes d'alarme » ou critères devant nous interpeller sur l'éventuel caractère pseudoscientifique d'une théorie ou d'une pratique ont été énumérés et brièvement expliqués en dernière partie du cadre théorique (cf. § II. D. 2.). Pour rappel, ces 10 critères sont issus de Lilienfeld et *al.* (2012) [69] et d'autres auteurs font mention de ces mêmes signes à travers la littérature s'intéressant aux pseudosciences [68, 71-76].



Sur la base de nos résultats et de ces 10 « signes d’alarme », nous allons tenter de statuer sur le caractère scientifique ou, au contraire, pseudoscientifique de la NF. Dans les cas où il s’est avéré que la NF répond à l’un de ces critères, au moins un exemple est donné afin d’illustrer notre jugement. Certains « signes d’alarme » se recoupant, un même exemple a parfois été utilisé pour plusieurs d’entre eux. Les informations issues des recherches documentaires que nous avons eu à effectuer afin de contextualiser les différentes étapes de ce travail ont également été prises en compte, en privilégiant cependant les exemples directement issus de nos résultats.

3.1. Manque de falsifiabilité et/ou surutilisation d’hypothèses *ad hoc*

Si l’éventuelle l’efficacité propre de la NF pourrait faire l’objet d’expérimentations scientifiques, au regard de notre première revue, la théorie sur laquelle repose la NF paraît difficile voire impossible à falsifier. Aucune de nos contributions scientifiques n’a mis en évidence une surutilisation d’hypothèses *ad hoc*.

La NF repose sur le concept de « lésion physiologique » du système nerveux autour duquel de nombreux autres concepts gravitent (e.g. la « fatigabilité » de groupes de neurones, le « *blind spot* » en tant qu’indicateur de l’activité cérébrale). Ce type de ‘lésions’ n’étant pas objectivable autrement que via un « examen neurologique fonctionnel », nous ne voyons pas d’expérimentation capable de fournir des preuves tangibles de leur existence ou, au contraire, de leur inexistence. Autrement dit, la théorie de NF, telle que nous l’avons identifiée et comprise, nous semble infalsifiable.

3.2. Manque d’autocorrection

La *scoping review* et, dans une moindre mesure, la première revue critique de la littérature effectuée (via l’article de Daubeny et *al.* 2010 [91]) nous indiquent que la NF fait preuve d’une résistance au changement.

La plupart des concepts fondamentaux de NF identifiés au cours de la *scoping review* étaient déjà présents dans le travail de thèse de FR Carrick, celui-ci datant de 1996 [24]. Il a donné lieu à la première publication scientifique de sa part sur un sujet de NF [25]. A notre connaissance, un seul concept de NF a été remis en question dans la littérature scientifique [114, 116, 141], il s’agit du concept du « *blind-spot* ». Malgré des critiques bien étayées à propos, entre autres, de la validité de cette procédure diagnostique pour évaluer l’activité cérébrale et détecter une



« hémisphéricité », nous avons constaté qu'en 2017 ce concept est toujours utilisé par certains « neurologues fonctionnels ». Ce constat a été fait sur la base du contenu des interviews semi-structurées et des sites internet. A travers la littérature, scientifique et non-scientifique, le « *blind-spot* » apparaît également encore présent au sein de la NF [86, 91, 99]. A notre connaissance, aucune étude n'a été menée dans le but d'établir la validité de cette procédure diagnostique telle qu'elle est utilisée en NF. Cet exemple du « *blind-spot* » illustre une résistance au changement au sein de la NF.

De prime abord, la stagnation de la théorie de NF n'est pas évidente à déceler. Par exemple, à travers les interviews effectuées et les sites internet examinés dans le cadre de notre première revue, les « neurologues fonctionnels » présentent souvent leur pratique comme étant à la pointe des neurosciences et la technologie est assez largement présente parmi les modalités de traitement proposées aux patients (e.g. applications sur tablettes numériques, Dynavision D2TM). Ainsi, la NF apparaît comme étant 'à la pointe' mais repose sur des concepts ayant peu voire pas évolué depuis plus de 30 ans.

3.3. Accent mis sur les confirmations

La réalisation d'études aux schémas peu robustes afin d'étudier l'efficacité propre d'une intervention peut être considérée comme une tendance à mettre l'accent sur les confirmations. De ce fait, nous invitons le lecteur à se référer au « signe d'alarme » suivant afin de connaître notre jugement concernant la NF.

3.4. Evitement de l'évaluation par les pairs et/ou production d'une littérature de faible qualité méthodologique

Le schéma des études rapportées dans les articles inclus dans nos deux premières revues, la qualité méthodologique des études évaluées au cours de la seconde revue, l'organigramme du journal FNRE ainsi que son contenu tendent à indiquer que la NF répond à ces deux caractéristiques. Une partie de ces éléments indiquent également une tendance à mettre l'accent sur les confirmations de la part d'au moins une partie des « neurologues fonctionnels ». Le raisonnement nous ayant mené à ces jugements concernant ces deux « signes d'alarme » est détaillé ci-dessous.



Qualité méthodologique de la littérature produite sur des sujets de Neurologie Fonctionnelle : qu'en savons-nous à l'issue de ce travail ? Les études rapportées dans les articles inclus dans deux de nos revues [77, 78] ont été réalisées selon des schémas d'études peu robustes (e.g. études de cas, études avant/après) et/ou présentent un risque général de biais important.

Concernant les schémas d'études, une inadéquation entre objectifs de recherche et schéma d'étude a été identifiée concernant les articles de la seconde revue. Tous avaient pour objectif d'investiguer le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention de NF mais seule une minorité avait inclus un groupe contrôle ou, un groupe contrôle approprié. Autrement dit, la plupart des schémas de ces études ne permettent pas de limiter les erreurs de raisonnement auxquelles nous sommes tous enclins tels que l'illusion de corrélation [69] ou le biais de confirmation [68, 69]. Cela renvoie au « signe d'alarme » précédent, i.e. « Accent mis sur les confirmations ».

D'autres études incluses dans cette seconde revue ont été conduites selon un schéma d'étude (potentiellement) approprié pour tester le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* d'une intervention. Cependant, leur risque général de biais a été évalué comme important et susceptible d'affecter la validité des résultats rapportés.

Le journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics* : forme d'évitement du processus d'évaluation par les pairs ? A priori, les « neurologues fonctionnels » ne peuvent pas être décrits comme évitant le processus d'évaluation par les pairs. Toutefois, nous pouvons nous interroger sur la rigueur et l'impartialité du journal FNRE, journal ayant parmi ses objectifs de publier des articles portant sur des sujets de NF [67]. En effet, au terme de notre seconde revue, un faisceau d'indices nous fait penser qu'il pourrait s'agir d'un journal manquant de ces deux qualités, représentant davantage une opportunité de publier des travaux sur des sujets de NF avec une évaluation réalisée 'en interne' qu'un 'rempart' veillant à la diffusion de travaux de recherche de qualité. Ce mode d'évaluation, i.e. évaluation effectuée au sein même d'un groupe, peut être considéré comme une forme d'évitement du processus d'évaluation par les pairs [68, 70].

Notre seconde revue nous a permis de mieux connaître le journal FNRE (non indexé dans les bases de données Medline et Scopus) en termes de contenu et d'organigramme. Un bref aperçu de ce dernier est nécessaire ici afin de comprendre notre position concernant ce quatrième « signe d'alarme ».



Le journal FNRE est présenté comme un journal scientifique à comité de lecture [67]. Celui-ci nous a été conseillé en tant que source d'articles scientifiques sur des sujets de NF par G Leisman, rédacteur en chef de ce journal et chercheur impliqué en NF. Il est l'auteur de plusieurs publications ayant pour sujet la NF appliquée aux troubles neurodéveloppementaux, notamment avec pour co-auteur R Melillo [107, 108, 142, 143]. R Melillo, également rédacteur en chef du journal FNRE, est chiropracteur et instructeur en NF [144]. Il est aussi à l'origine du concept *Brain Balance Achievement Centers*, comptant d'après le site internet de la marque 111 centres affiliés localisés aux Etats-Unis [145]. Le journal FNRE a également été recommandé en introduction de l'un des premiers séminaires de la série récemment proposée par le *Carrick Institute* en France, séminaire auquel ma collègue Marine Demortier et moi-même avons assisté (juillet 2017). Le *Carrick Institute* a entretenu des liens étroits avec ce journal [146] (information issue de l'ancienne page d'accueil du site internet du journal FNRE, lien inactif en date du 05 octobre 2018).

Sur la base de cet organigramme et des résultats de notre seconde revue, nous avons été amenés à nous interroger sur la rigueur et l'impartialité de ce journal. Les éléments suivants nous ont alerté :

- Au-delà de la faible qualité méthodologique des articles que nous avons évalués, le journal FNRE contient, en général, très peu d'articles de recherche au profit de nombreux *discussion papers* et de nombreuses revues narratives. Il apparaît donc étonnant que le journal FNRE soit indiqué comme une source substantielle d'articles scientifiques par certains acteurs centraux de NF, celui-ci contenant peu de faits et faisant une large place à la diffusion et aux débats d'idées.

- Parmi les consignes aux auteurs indiquées sur l'ancien site internet du journal FNRE, il était stipulé que « *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics* requires all authors and reviewers to declare any conflict of interest that may be inherent in their submissions. » [146]. Cependant, nous avons constaté que cela n'avait pas toujours été respecté par les auteurs [105, 109]. De manière plus générale, nous avons remarqué que la mention de potentiels conflits d'intérêts était le plus souvent absente ou incomplète lorsque des auteurs tels que FR Carrick et R Melillo avaient publié dans d'autres journaux scientifiques [91, 107, 108]. Pourtant, ces deux auteurs ont des intérêts financiers évidents non négligeables à travers des activités commerciales ayant pour objet la NF ; FR Carrick (entre autres) à travers son institut de formation (le *Carrick Institute*) et R Mellilo (entre autres) à travers les centres *Brain Balance Achievement*. Ces centres généreraient un revenu annuel de 50 millions de dollars selon une enquête journalistique menée en 2017 par Chris Benderev [147]. Il est possible de s'interroger sur l'impact qu'ont pu avoir ces conflits d'intérêts sur les résultats des études auxquelles ils ont contribué. Ces deux auteurs, ainsi que G Leisman, sont par ailleurs les principaux



contributeurs des neuf articles que nous avons évalués dans cette seconde revue [78].

L'intégralité de la littérature scientifique portant sur des sujets de NF n'ayant pas été couverte au cours de ce travail, une certaine réserve est nécessaire concernant nos observations à propos des « signaux d'alarme » dont il a été question dans cette section. Ces observations sont valables pour la littérature couverte, notamment à propos de la NF utilisée dans un contexte chiropratique, ainsi que pour le journal FNRE.

3.5. Excès de confiance basé sur des témoignages et des preuves anecdotiques

Notre première revue illustre particulièrement une telle tendance de la part des « neurologues fonctionnels ». Par ailleurs et comme précédemment mentionné, aucune preuve scientifique probante apparaît sous-tendre l'*efficacité propre* de la NF à l'issue de notre processus de recherche, à minima dans un contexte chiropratique.

Concernant notre première revue, comme précédemment évoqué, les résultats positifs rapportés ou escomptés suite à une prise en charge de NF reposent uniquement sur les témoignages de praticiens, de patients et/ou de familles de patients. Dans un chapitre du manuel utilisé dans le cadre de cette même revue, un chapitre dédié à la prise en charge des patients en NF [103], l'accumulation de cas cliniques en parallèle d'une absence de références probantes concernant l'*efficacité propre* de la NF s'inscrit dans cette tendance « d'excès de confiance basé sur des témoignages et des preuves anecdotiques ».

3.6. Prétentions extraordinaires

Les exemples de prétentions extraordinaires sont nombreux à l'issue des différentes étapes de notre travail.

Par exemple, le fait de proposer de recourir à la MV pour 'remédier' à des « lésions physiologiques », le plus souvent localisées dans le cerveau, alors même que les mécanismes d'action de la MV sont encore largement mal compris, relève de la prétention extraordinaire. Cela se révèle d'autant plus vrai que la revue systématique critique de la littérature que nous avons effectuée portant spécifiquement sur l'*effet* de la MV sur l'activité cérébrale a montré qu'aucune évidence scientifique ne soutenait actuellement ce postulat. Ce constat contraste, par exemple, avec les missions affichées par



le Carrick Institute: « *The ongoing mission of the Carrick Institute for Graduate Studies is to empower each learner with the tools necessary to serve humankind as the Clinical Neurologists of tomorrow by providing them with the most up-to-date information available today. The highest standards in education, patient care and innovation are upheld by our dynamic faculty, who share a common commitment to this cause.* ».

3.7. Absence de ‘connexion’ avec les connaissances établies

La NF, telle que diffusée par FR Carrick, repose sur une théorie au moins partiellement ‘déconnectée’ des connaissances établies. Nous venons de l’illustrer à travers l’exemple choisi concernant les « prétentions extraordinaires ».

Le principe d’une ‘dysfonction’ unique (i.e. une ou plusieurs « lésions physiologiques » du système nerveux) qui serait à l’origine de la plupart des conditions ou symptômes que peut présenter un patient, quel que soit leur nature, est un autre exemple de ‘déconnexion’ avec l’état actuel des connaissances.

Il paraît utile de rappeler ici qu’une théorie ou une pratique pseudoscientifique n’est pas forcément entièrement invalide ou inefficace, mais que les affirmations faites par leurs partisans outrepassent largement les preuves scientifiques disponibles [69]. Ainsi, si notre travail n’a pas pu s’intéresser à l’ensemble des concepts de NF, les deux exemples indiqués ci-dessus apparaissent suffisants pour affirmer que les « neurologues fonctionnels » sont, au moins pour certains, en rupture avec l’état des connaissances.

3.8. *Ad antequitem fallacy* ou l’argument de la tradition

Aucune de nos revues permet de mettre en évidence l’utilisation de l’argument de la tradition afin de légitimer la NF.

Toutefois, la NF existe depuis bientôt 40 ans et est présentée par son fondateur, FR Carrick, comme une approche comptant déjà des milliers de praticiens à travers le monde (14000 selon le site internet du *Carrick Institute*) [11, 148]. Dans une interview récente, FR Carrick indique que des centaines de patients lui sont référés chaque mois, y compris par des neurologues [149]. Il y ajoute, qu’en raison de la demande, un processus de sélection visant à ne sélectionner que les patients les plus dans le besoin a dû être mis en place [149]. L’utilisation de ce type d’informations à travers différents



modes de communication doit probablement être considérée comme un potentiel facteur de confusion entre tradition, combinaison de longévité et de popularité, et validité.

3.9. Usage d'un langage « hyper-technique »

Nos deux premières revues mettent en évidence l'utilisation d'un langage « hyper-technique » en NF.

Nous l'avons évoqué, les « neurologues fonctionnels » empruntent des termes aux neurosciences, à la neuro-anatomie ainsi qu'à la médecine conventionnelle. Cependant, l'ensemble que forment les concepts théoriques de NF et leurs applications cliniques est peu cohérent et peu plausible. Par exemple, une même série de tests (e.g. tests cérébelleux, évaluation des nerfs crâniens) peut être effectuée en NF pour évaluer un patient souffrant d'un trouble de l'attention avec hyperactivité et un patient souffrant d'une lombosciatique d'origine mécanique [103]. Sur la base d'un 'diagnostic' commun « d'hémisphéricité » droite, une prise en charge quasi similaire dans les deux cas est proposée, celle-ci incluant des manipulations, uniquement délivrées au niveau de l'hémicorps gauche, des exercices de respiration et des compléments alimentaires [103].

Aussi, les sections Introduction et Discussion de certains articles inclus dans notre seconde revue nous ont semblé très peu abordables du fait de l'utilisation d'un langage « hyper-technique » (cf. Tableau 10), tout comme l'article de FR Carrick portant sur le « *blind spot* » [25]. A sa publication, ce dernier a fait l'objet de plusieurs lettres à l'éditeurs, dont l'une soulignait l'utilisation d'un « jargon pseudoscientifique » [141].



Tableau 10. Tableau illustrant l'usage d'un langage « hyper-technique » de la part des auteurs d'articles inclus dans une revue critique à propos du *bénéfice* ou de l'*effet* de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle [78]

1st Author Year Journal	Passages issus des sections <i>Introduction</i> ou <i>Discussion</i> d'articles inclus dans une revue critique de la littérature à propos du <i>bénéfice</i> ou de l' <i>effet</i> de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle, illustrant l'utilisation d'un langage « hyper-technique »
Leisman 2010 Int J Disabil Hum Dev	"It has been shown that the inferior olive plays such an important role in timing that organisms with damage to these nuclei have problems learning new motor behaviors (22, 23). Intra- cellular recordings from cells in the inferior olive have shown that these cells oscillate spontaneously at 8–13 Hz. The inferior olive cells fire their action potential in a rhythmic fashion and it is thought that through its connection to the cerebellum the inferior olive is responsible for the timing signal that helps to control all movements. It is thought that the oscillation of the inferior olive results in a slight tremor of 10 Hz and occurs even when one is not moving (24). This movement, as previously described, is known as physiological tremor, allowing us to time movements as a metronome, when we learn to play the piano. It also has been demonstrated that with the experimental destruction of the inferior olive, behavioral tremor is abolished (24)." (issu de la section <i>Discussion</i> , p.279-280)
Daubeny 2010 Int J Disabil Hum Dev	"Spinothalamic input is directed mostly to the ventral posterior complex of the thalamus and cells caudal to it. In addition, the patches of spinothalamic terminations intermingled and partly overlapped with the cerebellothalamic projection (19). The thalamus is the major sensory integration area in the brain and receives information not only from spinal segments but from areas associated with vision and hearing as well. The thalamus receives a distinct set of spinal projections principally from the cervical level (20). Intrathalamic neuronal activity is responsible for brain activation of a variety of sensory modalities including vision and hearing as well as the somesthetic sensations. Spinal manipulations and acupuncture result in changes in the size of the perceived blind spot without changes to the size of the optic disc promoting a probable mechanism of thalamic integration." (issu de la section <i>Introduction</i> p.270)
Carrick 2013 Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	"The spatial response properties of medial (MVST) and lateral (LVST) vestibulospinal tract neurons during whole body sinusoidal angular rotations of cats in various planes demonstrate a maximum activation direction vector (MAD) that maximally excites the neuron [51]. We wanted to stimulate human subjects in a combination of planes to attempt a similar maximized response. It is likely that activation of reticulospinal fibers, with their resultant motor consequences, are an important part of the neural substrate of the VCR [52]. Reticulospinal fibers make an important contribution to the horizontal VCR and in response to stimuli in vertical planes, the pontomedullary reticulospinal fibers depend on convergence of inputs within the neck with otolith reflexes [53]. Natural stimulation of the labyrinth of decerebrate cats in vertical planes evokes responses of pontomedullary reticulospinal neurons, the largest fraction of which project to the lumbar cord, playing a role in gravity-dependent postural reflexes of neck and limbs [54]. The effectiveness of vestibulospinal and reticulospinal fibers can be modified by spontaneous activity of neurons in the C3 ventral horn subsequent to sinusoidal vestibular stimulation of decerebrate paralyzed cats in multiple vertical planes [55]." (issu de la section <i>Introduction</i> , p.346)



3.10. Absence de limites au champ d'application

A l'issue de notre première revue, la NF se caractérise en effet par un manque de limites de champ d'application. Les résultats de notre seconde revue vont également dans ce sens.

Par ailleurs, les indications proposées de la NF sont essentiellement des conditions et des symptômes chroniques pour lesquels de nombreuses interrogations persistent quant à leur(s) étiologie(s), physiopathologie et/ou leur prise en charge. Comme souligné par Smith et McDonald [150], ces 'zones d'ombres' pour la science créent l'opportunité pour certaines personnes de combler ces zones par des explications plus ou moins erronées, à minima questionnables, assorties de la proposition de traitements souvent onéreux. Sur la base de nos résultats, il semble légitime de s'interroger sur la possibilité que les promoteurs de la NF fassent partie de ces personnes.

Bien que certaines réserves aient été émises à propos de nos différents jugements concernant les 10 « signes d'alarme » proposés par Lilienfeld et *al.* 2012 [69], l'ensemble de ces signes ont été identifiés dans le cas de la NF, et ce, principalement à partir des résultats de nos revues. A l'issue de nos trois contributions scientifiques nous disposons ainsi d'un faisceau d'indices nous amenant à considérer que la NF est probablement une pratique pseudoscientifique, au moins lorsque celle-ci est utilisée dans un contexte chiropratique. Nos résultats nous mènent donc au même constat que celui fait à travers les critiques existantes à l'encontre de cette approche [19-21]. Toutefois, notre travail ne permet pas de nous prononcer sur la NF en général. Par ailleurs, il s'agit d'un jugement provisoire qu'il pourra être nécessaire de réviser avec le temps, en fonction des éventuelles évolutions théoriques et pratiques de la NF.

Des pratiques pseudoscientifiques sont décrites au sein des professions paramédicales (e.g. la microkinésithérapie) ainsi qu'au sein de la médecine conventionnelle (e.g. l'homéopathie). Il n'est donc pas surprenant que la chiropraxie n'échappe pas à cette réalité avec, par exemple, le cas de la NF.



C. Considérations méthodologiques et autres observations

1. Considérations méthodologiques et éthiques à propos des articles inclus dans nos travaux

1.1. Schémas d'études et qualité méthodologique des études rapportées dans les articles

Les principales considérations méthodologiques ainsi que leurs implications concernant les schémas d'études et la qualité méthodologique des études rapportées dans les articles inclus dans nos deux premières revues ont déjà été abordées dans les différentes parties de la section *Discussion des résultats* (cf. § V. B.). Nous n'y reviendrons que très brièvement ci-dessous.

a. *Scoping review*

Si une *scoping review* n'a habituellement pas pour finalité d'évaluer la littérature sur laquelle elle s'appuie [79, 151, 152], nous avons pu constater que dans un contexte chiropratique et sur une période allant de 1997 à 2014 la NF semble ne quasiment pas avoir fait l'objet de publications scientifiques autres que des études de cas. Seules deux études n'étaient pas des études de cas, celles-ci consistant en (i) un essai contrôlé non randomisé [25] et (ii) un essai contrôlé randomisé [91]. Ces deux essais ont pour point commun d'étudier les potentiels changements induits par la manipulation vertébrale ou des extrémités sur l'activité cérébrale et de reposer sur des concepts discutables, notamment ceux « d'hémisphéricité » et du « *blind spot* ».

b. Revue critique de la littérature (journal FNRE)

Lorsque nous nous sommes intéressés à l'évidence scientifique pouvant sous-tendre la NF, l'existence de très peu de littérature portant sur l'étude de son *bénéfice* ou de son *effet* s'est confirmée. Par ailleurs, notre évaluation de la qualité méthodologique du peu d'études aux schémas (potentiellement) appropriés à cet effet a montré qu'elles présentent toutes un risque général de biais important. Il n'est le plus souvent pas précisé (i) si une assignation secrète dans les groupes d'étude avait été prévue, (ii) si les sujets étaient 'en aveugle' ou naïfs de l'intervention reçue, et si (iii) l'évaluateur ainsi que (iv) la personne en charge d'effectuer les analyses statistiques étaient 'en aveugle' de l'intervention reçue. Aussi, dans ces études, aucune précision n'est apportée à propos de la reproductibilité et/ou



la fiabilité des critères de jugement utilisés.

c. Revue systématique critique de la littérature (manipulation vertébrale et activité cérébrale)

Concernant la dernière revue, portant sur l'évidence disponible à propos de l'*effet* de la MV sur l'activité cérébrale, une large majorité des études rapportées dans les articles inclus ont été considérées de 'faible' ou 'moyenne' qualité méthodologique. Les principaux risques de biais identifiés sont semblables à ceux identifiés dans la seconde revue (i.e. insu ou naïveté des sujets, insu de l'évaluateur et insu de la personne en charge des analyses statistiques). Toutefois, selon le champ de recherche, il se peut qu'il ne soit pas habituel, par exemple, de préciser si l'évaluateur et la personne en charge des analyses statistiques sont ou non 'en aveugle' de l'intervention testée. En tant que sources potentielles de biais, il nous paraît cependant pertinent de le mentionner de manière systématique.

Seules trois des 18 études incluses avaient comparé la MV à une intervention de type placebo. Cependant, il n'est pas certain que l'insu des sujets ait été maintenue avec succès dans deux d'entre elles [44, 135] et la nature des interventions (MV vs. intervention placebo) a été découverte par la majorité des sujets dans la troisième étude [122]. Le recours à un comparateur de type placebo ainsi que la vérification par questionnaire du maintien des sujets 'en aveugle' jusqu'au bout de l'étude est considéré important afin d'identifier un éventuel *effet spécifique* de la MV. En effet, de nombreux facteurs contextuels peuvent être à l'origine d'un effet placebo (ou nocébo) [140, 153], celui-ci pouvant générer des réactions neurophysiologiques notamment au niveau cérébral [153].

Ces précautions méthodologiques nous semblent d'autant plus importantes à prendre que, dans la plupart des articles inclus, les auteurs testent, a priori, l'hypothèse d'un mécanisme d'action de la MV sur l'activité cérébrale de type « *bottom-up* ». Selon cette hypothèse, la stimulation biomécanique que génère la MV serait à l'origine d'afférences, issues des différents récepteurs stimulés, à destination du système nerveux central, y compris du cerveau. En réponse à ces afférences, le cerveau générerait des messages efférents susceptibles d'être à l'origine de réponses neurophysiologiques, au moins transitoires, voire d'aboutir à des bénéfices cliniques. Par ailleurs, la majorité de ces études reposent sur une théorie contemporaine de la « *subluxation* » [154], théorie qui, à notre connaissance, reste à confirmer.



1.2. Les potentiels conflits d'intérêts présents dans les articles

Nos deuxième et troisième revues indiquent que la mention de l'absence ou de la présence de potentiels conflits d'intérêts de la part des auteurs des articles inclus est souvent absente ou incomplète. Cette observation est particulièrement valable pour les articles de la seconde revue et ce point a été déjà relevé et discuté (cf. § V. B. 3.4.). Dans d'autres cas, l'ensemble des auteurs indiquent n'avoir aucun conflit d'intérêts alors que des sources potentielles de conflits existent probablement pour certains d'entre eux [91, 118, 122, 135]. Cette seconde observation concerne davantage la troisième revue. Compte tenu du fait que la présence de conflits d'intérêts est susceptible d'affecter les résultats d'une étude, ces derniers étant généralement plus favorables qu'en l'absence de tels conflits [155], il est important que les auteurs fassent preuve de transparence à ce sujet.

2. Considérations méthodologiques à propos de nos travaux

2.1. Exhaustivité de la littérature couverte, sources d'informations choisies et sélection des articles

Pour nos trois revues, il est possible que tous les articles existants à propos de nos sujets d'intérêts n'aient pas été trouvés. Cela pourrait être particulièrement le cas pour nos deux premières revues. En effet, suite à la difficulté initialement rencontrée pour trouver de la littérature scientifique sur des sujets de NF via une recherche bibliographique conventionnelle, ce malgré l'assistance d'une bibliothécaire universitaire, des stratégies alternatives ont dû être mises en place. Nous voyons deux raisons au fait que notre recherche bibliographique initiale se soit avérée infructueuse : (i) le mot clé « functional neurology » ou ses déclinaisons (e.g. « chiropractic neurology ») ne sont pas nécessairement utilisés par les auteurs des articles portant sur la NF et (ii) le grand nombre d'indications proposées et d'outils thérapeutiques utilisés en NF rendent l'élaboration d'une équation de recherche pertinente impossible.

a. Scoping review

Dans le cadre de la première revue, une recherche par nom d'auteur a été réalisée via un moteur de recherche et deux bases de données. Des auteurs ont également directement été contactés afin d'obtenir leur liste de publications, une recherche a été effectuée dans le journal FNRE et une recherche dans les listes de références des articles inclus a été faite. Différentes stratégies ont



donc été mises en place afin de pallier à la difficulté rencontrée lors de notre recherche bibliographique initiale. Celles-ci ont permis d'obtenir 10 articles contre un seul initialement. Par ailleurs, aucune publication supplémentaire n'a été trouvée suite à la recherche effectuée dans les listes de publications envoyées par les auteurs contactés ainsi que dans les listes de références des articles inclus. Ce dernier point est important puisque seul un des auteurs de cette revue (ALM) a effectué la sélection des articles à partir des titres et des résumés, à l'exception des titres et résumés du journal FNRE pour lesquels deux auteurs (ALM et CLY) ont fait cette sélection de manière indépendante. La sélection des articles à partir des textes intégraux a été faite de manière indépendante par deux des auteurs (ALM et CLY). Il n'y a pas eu de désaccord à ce propos entre ces deux auteurs.

Face à cette même difficulté, nous avons fait le choix d'inclure d'autres sources d'informations que la littérature scientifique. Au moment où cette revue a été réalisée, les *scoping reviews* ne bénéficiaient ni d'une définition universelle ni d'un cadre méthodologique définitif [79, 151, 152]. Cependant, des recommandations méthodologiques existaient déjà [79, 151, 152] et, selon ces dernières, la consultation de différents acteurs impliqués dans le sujet d'intérêt (e.g. décideurs, cliniciens, patients) peut faire partie intégrante du processus de ce type de revue. Dans notre cas, cette consultation a été faite auprès de chiropracteurs présentant une expérience en NF et a été à la fois directe, à travers les interviews, et indirecte, à travers le manuel et le contenu des sites internet. Elle devait permettre d'obtenir suffisamment d'informations en rapport avec nos différents objectifs et les interviews devaient également être l'opportunité d'éclaircir certains aspects de la NF 'découverts' à travers les trois autres sources d'informations précédemment examinées.

L'examen de seulement cinq sites internet a abouti à une saturation des informations en rapport avec nos différents objectifs de recherche et la réalisation des quatre interviews n'a pas apporté d'informations supplémentaires substantielles à celles préalablement obtenues via nos trois autres sources. Ainsi, si le choix de nos sources d'informations peut être discuté, la consistance des informations collectées à partir de celles-ci suggère que cela nous a permis de dresser un aperçu réaliste de ce qu'est la NF dans un contexte chiropratique.

Du fait que trois des quatre sources utilisées ne contenaient que des informations éparpillées à propos des concepts fondamentaux de la NF, seul le manuel a été utilisé comme source d'informations à ce sujet. Les interviews semi-structurées ont toutefois permis de clarifier et de confirmer les concepts précédemment identifiés dans le manuel. La description de la NF en termes de théorie à laquelle nous avons abouti à l'issue de cette *scoping review* s'est avérée être en accord avec celle proposée par des organisations de NF [63, 156].



b. Revue critique de la littérature (journal FNRE)

Pour la seconde revue, une recherche bibliographique a été effectuée via le journal FNRE. Présenté comme une source d'informations scientifiques par plusieurs acteurs de la NF, le journal FNRE paraissait une alternative pertinente afin d'identifier l'évidence disponible concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF. La sélection des articles à partir des titres, des résumés puis des textes intégraux a été effectuée de manière indépendante par les deux auteurs de cette revue (ALM et CLY). Un seul titre avait été retenu par l'un des auteurs mais pas par le second. Après brève discussion et prise en compte de son résumé, l'article en question a été inclus. S'il est peu probable que l'ensemble des articles que nous aurions pu obtenir via ce journal n'aient pas été trouvés, il reste possible que des faits soutenant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF existent ailleurs que dans ce journal. Le peu d'articles trouvés dans le cadre de la première revue et la nature des études y étant rapportées suggèrent cependant que même en multipliant nos stratégies de recherche afin de tenter d'obtenir davantage de littérature il paraît peu probable que nous aurions trouvé des preuves scientifiques substantielles à ce propos.

c. Revue systématique critique de la littérature (manipulation vertébrale et activité cérébrale)

Dans le cadre de notre troisième revue, une recherche bibliographique classique a pu être effectuée via un moteur de recherche et deux bases de données. Afin de l'optimiser, une bibliothécaire universitaire a été sollicitée. La sélection des articles à partir des titres a été effectuée par un seul des auteurs du manuscrit de cette revue (ALM), ce à deux reprises. Trois publications supplémentaires ont été trouvées à partir des listes de références des articles initialement inclus. Etant donné que ce domaine de recherche est peu développé, il est fort probable que les chercheurs de ce domaine aient une bonne connaissance de l'ensemble de la littérature sur le sujet. Ainsi, il paraît peu probable que nous soyons passés à côté de certaines références lors de la recherche bibliographique à partir des listes de références. La sélection à partir des résumés et des textes intégraux a été effectuée par deux des auteurs (ALM et CLY), de manière indépendante, sans qu'il y ait eu de désaccord nécessitant de solliciter un des autres auteurs du manuscrit de cette revue (MAA, MS, et PS).



2.2. Extraction des données

L'extraction des données dans des tableaux créés à cet effet a, de manière générale et pour les trois revues, été réalisée de façon indépendante par au moins deux auteurs. Le contenu des différents tableaux a ensuite été comparé. Seules les informations issues du manuel ainsi que des sites internet utilisés dans la première revue ont été extraites par un seul auteur (ALM). Dans ces deux cas, l'intégralité des sources a été lue au moins à deux reprises, de manière indépendante à la première extraction en ce qui concerne les sites internet, afin de minimiser la survenue d'erreurs ou d'oublis. Pour ce qui est du manuel, l'extraction des informations en rapport avec nos objectifs de recherche a été facilitée par la présence de chapitres quasi exclusivement dédiés à nos différents objectifs de recherche.

L'extraction des données au cours de la *scoping review* n'a entraîné aucun désaccord entre les auteurs (en ce qui concerne les articles scientifiques et les interviews puisque les deux autres sources n'ont été traitées que par un auteur) et les retranscriptions narratives faites suite aux interviews semi-structurées n'ont fait l'objet que de très peu de modifications de la part des praticiens interviewés. En revanche, l'extraction des données a nécessité sur certains points spécifiques davantage de discussions entre les auteurs des deux autres revues. Ces points sont précisés ci-dessous. En dehors de ces derniers, cette étape n'a pas donné lieu à de difficulté particulière ou de désaccord ayant nécessité de solliciter une troisième personne.

Concernant la seconde revue, les informations rapportées par les auteurs des articles inclus à propos de l'éthique et du schéma d'étude employé n'étaient souvent pas claires. Si un consensus a toujours été trouvé entre les deux auteurs de la revue (ALM et CLY), une tierce personne a été sollicitée pour une des études [105] et il reste possible que des erreurs d'interprétation aient été faites, notamment à propos du schéma d'étude employé dans les articles examinés. Dans un souci de transparence vis à vis du lecteur, en cas de doute à propos du schéma d'étude utilisé, cela était clairement signalé dans la revue.

Dans le cadre de troisième revue, sur la base des recommandations de Bland et Altman (2001) [124], nous avons prévu de prendre en compte uniquement les résultats issus de comparaisons inter-groupes (ou inter-interventions dans le cas des études conduites selon un plan d'étude croisé). Du fait que dans certaines études les analyses statistiques et/ou leurs résultats avaient été rapportés de façon incomplète et/ou étaient confus, après discussions, nous avons privilégié une approche plus souple, au bénéfice des auteurs des articles en cas de doute. Ainsi, si des erreurs d'interprétation de notre part concernant les analyses statistiques et les résultats de ces études ont pu être faites, nous avons



veillé à ce que cela ne soit pas au détriment des auteurs des articles évalués.

2.3. Critères de qualité utilisés

Cette section concerne uniquement nos deuxième et troisième contributions scientifiques, la première n'incluant pas de dimension critique.

Pour ces deux revues, nous n'avons pas utilisé des listes de critères de qualité standards, elles n'ont donc pas été validées et leur fiabilité n'a pas été testée. Ainsi, il se peut que d'autres auteurs auraient utilisé d'autres critères, aboutissant ou non à un jugement différent concernant la qualité méthodologique des études. Cependant, dans les deux cas, nous avons essentiellement sélectionné des items visant à évaluer les risques de biais classiquement rencontrés dans les études ayant pour objectif d'évaluer l'efficacité d'une intervention, tels que ceux recommandés par le groupe Cochrane [104] ou ceux proposés à travers l'échelle PEDro [157].

Cette approche nous a permis d'adapter nos listes de critères de qualité aux sujets couverts. Par exemple, nous n'avons pas considéré 'l'aveuglement' du thérapeute comme un critère de qualité étant donné que cela n'était pas réalisable pour les d'interventions testées, ce pour les deux revues. Les articles inclus dans notre troisième revue rapportent essentiellement les résultats d'études expérimentales, n'incluant pas de critère de jugement clinique. Ainsi, il nous est paru moins pertinent d'évaluer pour ces études si une assignation secrète dans les groupes d'étude avait été respectée ou si l'ensemble des sujets avaient reçu l'intervention prévue (i.e. MV ou contrôle), ce malgré qu'il s'agisse de sources de biais communément évaluées dans le cadre d'essais cliniques randomisés.

Aussi, nous pensons que l'utilisation de listes de critères de qualité non standards n'a pas affecté nos conclusions concernant ces deux revues. Les études rapportées dans les articles obtenus via le journal FNRE se sont avérées être de très faible qualité méthodologique et la seule étude de meilleure qualité méthodologique avait utilisé un critère de jugement dont la validité n'est pas établie. Il est donc peu probable que l'utilisation d'autres critères de qualité et/ou une autre manière d'évaluer ces critères aurait abouti à une conclusion différente. La dernière revue avait pour but de savoir s'il est établi que la MV a un *effet clinique* via un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*. Indépendamment de la qualité méthodologique des études incluses, aucune étude investiguant une éventuelle corrélation entre un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale* et un *effet clinique* n'a été trouvée, toutes se limitant à l'étude d'un éventuel *effet sur l'activité cérébrale*. Autrement dit, quel que soit l'évaluation



méthodologique de ces études, la conclusion relative au but de cette revue resterait inchangée.

2.4. Analyse des données

Seule notre troisième revue aurait potentiellement pu donner lieu à une ou plusieurs méta-analyses. Cependant, de telles analyses n'ont pas été possibles en raison (i) de l'hétérogénéité des études incluses en termes de sujets, de critères de jugement et de protocoles expérimentaux pour un critère de jugement donné et (ii) de la qualité méthodologique des études incluses, pour la plupart évaluées comme étant de 'faible' ou 'moyenne' qualité méthodologique. Cette revue reste toutefois une revue systématique critique et a donc permis de réaliser un état des lieux des connaissances actuelles à propos de l'*effet* de la MV sur l'activité cérébrale et de la pertinence de celui-ci à un niveau clinique.

3. Limites et forces du projet de thèse

Nous avons fait le choix de contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de la NF en débutant par ses origines, c'est à dire en s'intéressant à la NF telle que fondée et diffusée par FR Carrick et, plus particulièrement, lorsque cette approche est utilisée dans un contexte chiropratique. De ce fait, il se peut que l'aperçu de la NF proposé à l'issue de notre première revue ne reflète pas l'ensemble des concepts défendus par les différents promoteurs de la NF. Cependant, comme précédemment mentionné, nous pensons que cette revue a permis de dresser un portrait réaliste de ce qu'est la NF dans le contexte que nous avons choisi. Elle a aussi permis de produire un document libre d'accès aux étudiants, cliniciens, enseignants et institutions intéressés par la NF, sans que ces derniers aient besoin d'assister à de multiples séminaires proposés par des organismes privés.

A l'issue de notre première revue, nous nous sommes intéressés à l'évidence disponible concernant le *bénéfice* ou l'*effet* de la NF. Si restreindre notre recherche bibliographique à un seul journal a conduit à une des limitations de ce travail, ce choix a été l'opportunité de s'intéresser plus en détail à celui-ci, notamment d'en comprendre l'organigramme. Aussi, le fait d'obtenir très peu d'articles a été mis à profit afin d'apporter une dimension pédagogique à cette seconde revue.

Toujours dans le but de mieux connaître la validité scientifique de la NF, nous avons mené une troisième revue visant à établir si l'un des concepts clé de NF repose ou non sur des faits scientifiques. Notre choix s'est porté sur le rôle attribué en NF à la MV. Ce dernier choix, combiné aux précédents, nous a permis de réunir suffisamment d'éléments pour nous prononcer sur le caractère



scientifique vs. pseudoscientifique de la NF lorsque celle-ci est utilisée dans un contexte chiropratique. Cela nous semble être une première étape raisonnable et importante dans l'étude de la validité de la NF en tant que chiropracteurs. En effet, dans le cas de la France, si la chiropraxie est légalement reconnue, la profession n'est pas pour autant toujours acceptée par les professionnels de santé. Dans ce contexte, il est essentiel qu'au sein de la profession nous évaluions nos propres pratiques, d'une part afin que les chiropracteurs continuent de répondre à leurs obligations légales, devant permettre de garantir la qualité et la sécurité des soins apportés aux patients, et d'autre part afin de poursuivre son intégration dans le système de santé.



VI CONCLUSION ET PERSPECTIVES

La NF est décrite comme une approche thérapeutique conservatrice, incluant de nombreux outils thérapeutiques, y compris la MV. La NF pourrait être utilisée pour de nombreuses conditions ou symptômes, neuro-musculo-squelettiques et non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques, souvent chroniques. Elle repose sur une théorie originale et complexe, peu accessible pour les non-initiés. Dans son ensemble, celle-ci apparaît également peu plausible, au moins en partie ‘déconnectée’ de l’état actuel des connaissances, ce malgré son apparent ancrage scientifique. Aucune évidence scientifique montrant que la MV a un *effet clinique* via un *effet sur l’activité cérébrale*, postulat central de NF, n’a été trouvée. Aussi, aucune évidence scientifique de qualité méthodologique suffisante n’a été trouvée à propos du *bénéfice* ou de l’*effet* de la NF. Les résultats issus des différentes étapes de ce travail nous ont amené à considérer que la NF est probablement une pratique pseudoscientifique, au moins lorsque celle-ci est utilisée dans un contexte chiropratique. En raison de travaux centrés sur la NF dans un contexte chiropratique, cette thèse ne permet pas de nous prononcer quant au caractère scientifique vs. pseudoscientifique de la NF en général.

Perspectives et recommandations à propos de futurs travaux de recherche

Il pourrait être pertinent de poursuivre le processus d’évaluation critique de la littérature portant sur le *bénéfice* ou l’*effet* de la NF. Cela permettrait de nuancer ou de conforter nos conclusions à ce propos. Dans le cadre du second projet de thèse portant sur la NF (cf. § III.), une revue critique est en cours sur la littérature ayant pour auteur ou co-auteur FR Carrick. Il ressort des premières étapes de ce travail que très peu d’articles portent sur des études investiguant le *bénéfice* ou l’*effet* de la NF (communication orale avec Marine Demortier, doctorante travaillant sur ce second projet).

Avant d’allouer des fonds à de nouvelles études ayant pour objectif d’étudier l’efficacité propre de la NF, il pourrait être pertinent que des tiers indépendants observent et suivent dans le temps un échantillon suffisamment large de patients pris en charge en pratique clinique selon les concepts de NF. Ainsi, il serait possible de connaître (i) quelles sont les conditions réellement rencontrées en pratique, (ii) dans quelles proportions ces conditions sont rencontrées, (iii) si les résultats rapportés reposent sur une évaluation clinique objective et (iv) si ces résultats sont durables. Dans le cas où de nouvelles études devraient être menées, celles-ci devraient être conduites selon des schémas de type essais contrôlés randomisés et avec la rigueur nécessaire afin d’éviter au mieux les principaux risques de biais. La contribution d’investigateurs indépendants à ces éventuelles études serait



également nécessaire.

Une liste de recommandations méthodologiques a été faite à l'issue de la troisième contribution scientifique concernant les futures études qui auront pour objectif d'étudier les potentiels effets de la MV sur l'activité cérébrale et les éventuels effets cliniques associés. Nous invitons le lecteur à s'y référer s'il le souhaite. Aussi, avant de poursuivre des études sur des sujets dits souffrant de « douleurs rachidiennes subcliniques », présentant des « sublaxations chiropratiques », plusieurs étapes préalables semblent nécessaires. Notamment, il faudrait (i) clarifier le fait que ces sujets présentent réellement des altérations neurophysiologiques en comparaison avec des sujets sains et (ii) établir que les « sublaxations » que présenteraient ces sujets soient à l'origine de ces altérations neurophysiologiques, si altérations il y a.

Perspectives et recommandations à propos de la Neurologie Fonctionnelle concernant la profession chiropratique, à minima en France

La réglementation encadrant le métier de chiropracteur en France combinée à nos résultats indiquent qu'il n'est actuellement pas souhaitable d'intégrer la NF au cursus de formation initiale ou au programme de formation continue des chiropracteurs. En effet, la NF est fortement susceptible de conduire un chiropracteur à une pratique hors de son champ de compétence légal. Par ailleurs, aucune évidence scientifique acceptable n'a pu être trouvée concernant l'efficacité propre de la NF. Bien que l'intégralité de la littérature portant sur cet aspect n'ait probablement pas été couverte, le manque de plausibilité de la théorie proposée en NF est un facteur supplémentaire devant inciter à la prudence avant toute diffusion de cette approche via des institutions en charge de la formation initiale et continue des chiropracteurs, y compris dans le cadre de la prise en charge de troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques.

Les institutions en charge de ces missions ne sont pas les seuls vecteurs de diffusion de ce type d'approches ; celles-ci étant souvent enseignées au cours de séminaires proposés par des organismes indépendants. Il est donc nécessaire que chiropracteurs et futurs chiropracteurs disposent des outils nécessaires afin d'être en mesure de faire eux-mêmes le tri entre ce qui relève de l'expérience ou de la croyance et ce qui relève de la connaissance. Ces outils sont la connaissance et l'esprit critique. Il n'est pas facile d'être au fait de toutes les avancées dans les domaines se rapportant à notre pratique. Notre esprit critique doit alors 'prendre le relais'. En complément des enseignements habituels visant à développer un raisonnement scientifique (e.g. méthodologie de la recherche, lecture critique d'articles scientifiques), il pourrait être utile de sensibiliser les étudiants en chiropraxie ainsi



que les chiropracteurs aux critères devant les alerter quant à l'éventuel caractère pseudoscientifique d'une pratique [68, 69, 76, 158]. Il pourrait également être pertinent de les familiariser avec les erreurs de raisonnement auxquelles nous sommes tous sujets (e.g. illusion de corrélation, biais de confirmation), celles-ci favorisant l'adhésion à des pratiques pseudoscientifiques [69, 158, 159]. Enfin, tous les chiropracteurs en exercice n'ayant pas bénéficié d'une éducation visant à développer un raisonnement scientifique, la proposition de formations continues ayant cet objectif devrait être étendue.



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ANNEXE I: Article 1 _ *Unravelling functional neurology: a scoping review of theories and clinical applications in a context of chiropractic manual therapy*



REVIEW

Open Access



Unravelling functional neurology: a scoping review of theories and clinical applications in a context of chiropractic manual therapy

Anne-Laure Meyer^{1,2,3*} , Amanda Meyer⁴, Sarah Etherington⁵ and Charlotte Leboeuf-Yde^{1,2,3}

Abstract

Background: Functional Neurology (FN), a seemingly attractive treatment approach used by some chiropractors, proposes to have an effect on a multitude of conditions but some of its concepts are controversial.

Objectives and design: A scoping review was performed to describe, in the context of chiropractic manual therapy, 1) the FN theories, and 2) its clinical applications (i.e. its indications, examination procedures, treatment modalities, treatment plans, and clinical outcomes) using four sources: i) one key textbook, ii) the scientific peer-reviewed literature, iii) websites from chiropractors using FN, and iv) semi-structured interviews of chiropractors using FN.

Methods: The scientific literature was searched in PubMed, PsycINFO, and SPORTDiscus, completed by a hand search in the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation and Ergonomics* (November 2016 and March 2017, respectively). The only textbook on the topic we found was included and articles were chosen if they had an element of manual therapy. There was no restriction for study design but discussion papers were excluded. Websites were found in Google using the search term "Functional Neurology". Chiropractors, known to use FN, were invited based on their geographical location. Theories were mainly uncovered in the textbook as were all aspects of the clinical applications except treatment plans. The other three sources were used for the five aspects of clinical applications. Results were summarized and reported extensively in tables.

Results: Eleven articles were included, five websites scrutinized, and four semi-structured interviews performed. FN is based on the belief that reversible lesions in the nervous system are the cause of a multitude of conditions and that specific clusters of neurons can be positively affected by manipulative therapy, but also by many other stimuli. Diagnostic procedures include both conventional and unusual tests, with an interpretation specific to FN. Initial treatment is intense and clinical outcomes reported as positive.

Conclusion: FN gives the impression to be a complex alternative to the old variant of the chiropractic subluxation model, in which the vertebral subluxation is replaced by "physiological lesions" of the brain, and the treatment, spinal adjustments, are complemented by various neurological stimuli. Both models purport to treat not the symptoms but the cause. We conclude there is a need for more scientific documentation on the validity of FN.

Keywords: Functional neurology, Chiropractic, Spinal manipulation, Scoping review

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Background

Chiropractic is a health profession that is legally recognized in several countries under a regulatory framework to deal with neuromusculoskeletal conditions [1, 2]. Spinal manipulation is one of the key aspects of chiropractic treatment, often combined with advice on life-style, physical activities, specific exercises, and ergonomics [3, 4]. Clinical experience shows that manipulation of joints can have a pain-reducing effect, and this has also been confirmed in purely experimental studies [5], providing at least some evidence for the approach.

However, some chiropractors propose therapeutic solutions outside the recognized scope of chiropractic practice. For as long as chiropractors have existed, some practitioners have also treated non-musculoskeletal conditions such as asthma, colic in children, and dysmenorrhea, although this part of clinical practice has been less common than the treatment for musculoskeletal conditions [4, 6, 7]. The rationale for such treatment is that spinal manipulation can have an effect also on the autonomic nervous system [8].

There are several currents within chiropractic that purport to successfully treat various non-musculoskeletal conditions. One such approach is Functional Neurology (FN), which, at first glance has as its rationale the concept that disturbances of the physiology in the nervous system, especially those in the brain, can have many detrimental effects on the body. These disturbances are proposed to be often reversible or at least to have the potential for improvement. The list of conditions proposed to be successfully treated by FN is extensive, the diagnostic procedures complex and the therapeutic approach often multi-faceted.

When attempting to review the origins of FN, the earliest reference to FN found in the scientific literature is an article from 1997 by a chiropractor, also presented as the founder of FN, FR Carrick [9]. In this article, he stated that spinal manipulation can alter the size of the physiological blind spot of the eye in certain cases, a phenomenon that he claimed was a proof that spinal manipulation has an effect on brain function. In that article, there is also a lengthy presentation of the presumed causative link between spinal manipulation and brain function. This work elicited several responses to the editor, with many questions and criticisms [10–16], but also generated positive comments [17–19].

Despite the criticism that FN has encountered over the last 20 years, both inside and outside the profession [10, 14–16, 20, 21], FN appears to have become an attractive discipline for many chiropractors [3, 22], promoted by some as a discipline at the cutting edge of science [22, 23]. For example, a recent survey of the

Australian chiropractic workforce reports that 13.3% of the respondents use FN [3]. Other health practitioners (e.g. medical doctors, physiotherapists) also seem to be interested in this new discipline, having access to FN courses [24].

The main criticism leveled at FN concerns the lack of scientific basis [10, 14–16, 20, 21]. In addition, published information seems to be sparse and, for the uninitiated, the subject is complex. An overview of FN would therefore be of value to chiropractors, students and chiropractic educators, with an interest in FN to: 1) provide a basic description of its concepts and their clinical applications and 2) to present the scientific evidence underlying these basic concepts.

In this scoping review we will focus on the first point by attempting to provide a basic description of FN concepts and their clinical applications, in the context of chiropractic manual therapy. Our six research objectives were to describe: 1) the theories that constitute the basis of FN, 2) the conditions that functional neurologists treat, 3) the diagnostic procedures, 4) the therapeutic modalities, 5) the course of care, and 6) the clinical outcomes obtained or expected with this approach.

The field of FN is large, composed of different sub-specialties [25], some of which have developed somewhat different directions than the original one. The work of G Leisman and R Melillo in the area of FN applied to childhood neurodevelopmental disorders is an example of such sub-specialties [26]. Nevertheless, it appears to be practiced primarily by chiropractors. In fact, FN is also known as “Chiropractic Neurology”. For these reasons, we have limited our review of the literature to the fundamental concepts of FN and/or with FN as a supplement to “traditional” chiropractic, i.e. which would typically include the use of manual therapy.

Method

Design and brief description of study

In order to obtain information on our six research objectives, we performed a scoping review using three written sources and one semi-structured interview, as briefly described below. Scoping reviews are often used to obtain a preliminary understanding of a poorly understood topic, have a non-rigid but systematic approach, allow for multiple methods, and do not necessitate a critical element [27, 28]. Although there are currently no strict methodological rules for conducting scoping reviews, we endeavored to follow the six steps of the Arksey and O'Malley framework [27].

Initially, the first author read the only comprehensive textbook on the concepts of FN that was found [29]. We used this source as the basis or starting point for our future work in order to gain an



understanding of the FN theoretical background. Thereafter, we consulted the scientific literature to see what information was available and searched the internet to obtain an idea of how practitioners, who state that they practice FN, describe their activities. Also, we interviewed a number of practitioners who use FN in their daily practice, making it possible to ask clarifying questions. To allow for ease of reading, several aspects of the various methods have been described in Additional files 1, 2 and 3.

Search strategy for information

Written information

Textbook We had access to a textbook [29] that served as our first source of information. This book, recommended by organizations such as the American Chiropractic Neurology Board and the Functional Neurology Society, is authored by a chiropractor, RW Beck, with the foreword written by FR Carrick.

Scientific literature It was difficult to find scientific literature on FN using the usual search strategies, for which reason alternative methods were employed. These have been described in Additional file 1. Briefly, a search by name of author on PubMed, PsycINFO, and SPORTDiscus was conducted. This was complemented by contacting by email a number of practitioners and/or researchers known to be involved in FN to ask them for their updated publication list. Following this step, we searched for articles in the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*, which has FN among its aims and scope. This journal was recommended by one of the researchers involved in FN.

Websites The internet was searched via Google using the keyword "Functional Neurology" in order to capture a number of professional websites of chiropractors presenting themselves as functional neurologists.

Interviews

Through our network of contacts, we identified European-based chiropractors who used FN in their daily practice and who were likely to participate in a future interview. A convenience sample consisting of five of those, all living in France, where also the chief investigator was located, were finally invited. The four who replied were interviewed. These four chiropractors were contacted by email, provided with information about the survey and asked to provide informed consent.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria of articles and websites

Scientific articles

Articles were included if they described studies on a FN therapeutic approach to one or more specific condition(s) or if they described studies on a FN therapeutic approach on healthy or non-healthy subjects with positive clinical sign(s). Also, the articles had to include the use of manual therapy. Articles written by functional neurologists dealing with issues such as medication use or modified states of consciousness were not included. Discussion papers, abstracts, poster presentations, conference papers, and letters to the editors were excluded.

Websites

Websites of chiropractors describing themselves as functional neurologists were included if they clearly mentioned that they were *Diplomates of the American Chiropractic Neurology Board* (DACNB), as this seems to indicate that the person has obtained a certain level of proficiency on this topic. There were no restriction criteria regarding their nationality or their number of years of experience in FN. However, the search was restricted to websites written in English.

Inclusion criteria for the interview

Our inclusion criteria were that the chiropractors were DACNB or, at least, in active training. They also had to be willing to clarify the basic concepts of FN and to describe the applications of FN in their daily practice during a semi-structured interview. We selected the four French chiropractors for geographical reasons, as the research team was located in Paris.

Collection of relevant information

Written information

Textbook The chapters of interest of the textbook were selected based on its table of contents. The whole book was read prior to this in order to attempt to gain a good understanding of the topic.

Scientific articles The first investigator searched the databases and publication lists forwarded by the authors on request (see Additional file 1) and selected the potentially relevant full texts from titles and abstracts. As the authors were not familiar with FN, the selection of potentially relevant full texts was generous. ALM and CLY independently made the search in the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics* and selected the potential relevant full texts from titles and abstracts. All full texts were independently assessed in relation to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In addition, the first



investigator searched reference lists for relevant articles from the databases and the journal.

Websites Once the first author had found the mention that the chiropractors were DACNB, the corresponding websites were screened (except for their blog section) sequentially, in the order by which they appeared in a Google search conducted in September 2016. This was performed by searching for terms in relation to FN and our research objectives. When no new information was found for one topic, search was stopped for this topic but continued for the others until no new information was found. Texts were documented with screenshots.

Interviews

There are no strict rules for how to conduct or interpret interviews in scoping reviews. Relevant information was collected through a semi-structured interview designed by the first author and another PhD student. It was tested on one of the chiropractors, after which some improvements were made, mainly to the wording of the questions. The interview contained twenty-four questions, eleven were used in this review and the others will be used elsewhere (see Additional file 1). Clarifying questions were added as needed during the interviews. The interview instrument was constructed based on our specific questions related to FN and thus had not been previously used, tested or validated.

Ethical considerations

According to French law [30, 31], no ethics permission is required when interviewing consenting adults in a non-interventional context. However, the written consent of each interviewed chiropractor concerning the recording of the interview and its use as research material was obtained. Furthermore, no personal information was collected and all results were reported anonymously. The transcribed versions were provided to the interviewees for comments.

Extraction of information

Written information

The information from the textbook by RW Beck [29] was retrieved by the first author from specific chapters almost entirely dedicated to our topics of interest. Chapters 1, 4 and 18 were used to extract the theories, which were complemented by information from chapters 3, 9, 19 and 20. Chapter 19 and, to a lesser extent chapter 20, were used to extract the indications. Chapter 4 and, to a lesser extent chapter 19, were used for examination procedures. Chapter 20 and, to a lesser extent chapter 19, were used for treatment modalities. The information related to the outcomes of treatment were extracted from chapter 19. Despite a

chapter dedicated to clinical cases, there was no detailed information on treatment plans. References in this text (section "Neurophysiological theories") refer directly to these chapters and relevant pages to assist the reader who might want to compare our information with that of the textbook.

Descriptive checklists were created to collect systematic information from the scientific articles and from the websites, in relation to the research objectives (available in Additional file 2a and b). The format and contents were somewhat different, depending on the data source. For example, the websites were expected to provide information on expected outcome rather than reported outcome whereas the reverse was expected from the scientific literature. The search for relevant information in the scientific literature was done independently by two authors (ALM and CLY). The descriptive checklist for the websites was completed by the first author who blindly performed this procedure twice for each website.

Interviews

Each interview was taped and transcribed in a narrative form and in a tabulated form to better visualize the information (tabulated form is available in Additional file 2c). They were conducted by the first author and another PhD student, one of whom was responsible for the narrative transcript of two of the interviews and the other for the transcript of the remaining two. After agreement between the two interviewers on the content of each narrative transcription (tapes were available in case of disagreement), the transcript was sent to the interviewed chiropractor to obtain his/her agreement on its content. Absence of feedback was interpreted as an acceptance of the text (the interviewees were informed of this). Thereafter, based on each narrative transcript, the two interviewers independently extracted and collated information by themes in a table, which was created in relation to the research objectives of the review. The content of their respective tabulated transcript was compared for agreement (final table is available in Additional file 2c).

Data analysis and synthesis

Initially, the first author identified which of the four sources had dealt with the various research objectives (see Table 1). Thereafter, we concentrated on one item at a time, collecting the relevant information either in a table or as narrative text. The multiple methods are detailed in Additional file 3. A narrative synthesis was done for each research objective, based mainly on the tabulated overview of the information.



Table 1 Sources used in a scoping review on Functional Neurology to obtain information on six research objectives

Research objectives	Book (n = 1)	Scientific articles		Websites (n = 5)	Interviews (n = 4)
		Randomized controlled trial and controlled trial (n = 2)	Case reports (n = 9)		
Theories	1				
Indications	1		9	5	4
Diagnostic procedures	1	2	9	4	4
Therapeutic modalities	1	2	9	5	4
Treatment plans			7	3	3
Clinical outcomes	1		9	5	4

Results

General information

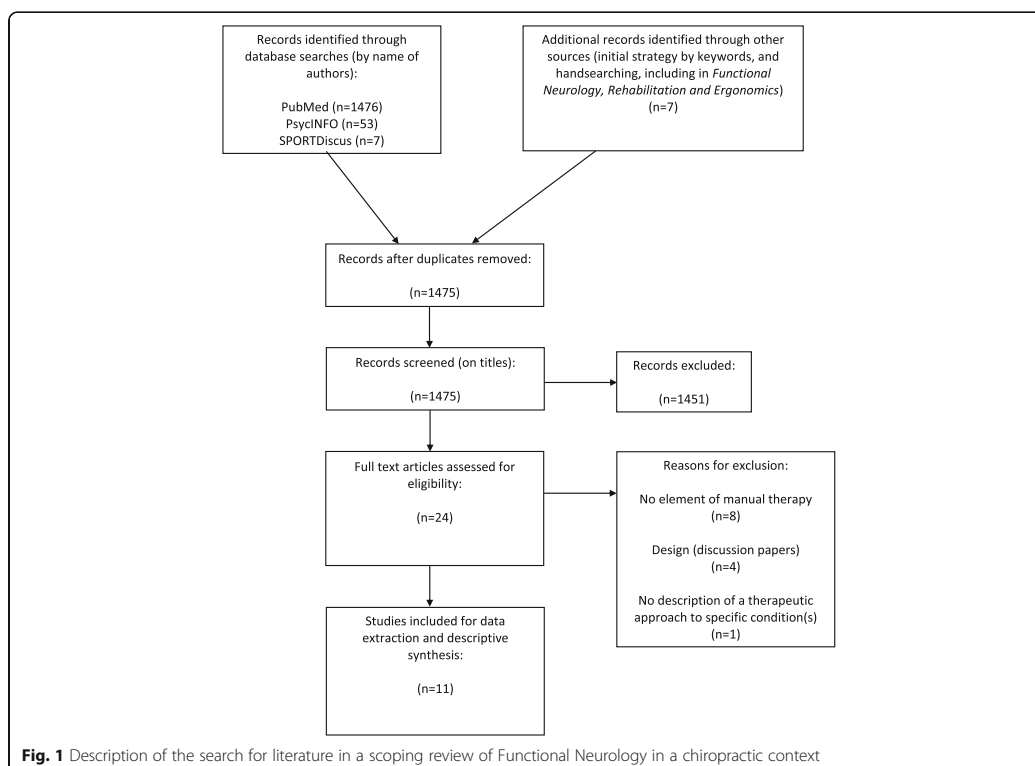
Textbook

The textbook provided information for five of our objectives (theories, indications, diagnostic procedures, treatment modalities and short-term outcomes). As shown in

Table 1, it was the only source that could clearly be used to describe the theories of FN. We selected some of the major concepts of FN, which we have attempted to describe in the text below (“Detailed results”) in order to capture the theoretical framework of FN, as presented in this book.

Scientific articles

The selection process is summarized in Fig. 1. Three case reports, one controlled trial, and one randomized controlled trial were found in our areas of inquiry in the selected databases. Six case reports were found through hand searching, including three in the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*. Lists of publications obtained from known FN researchers and/or practitioners did not provide any additional relevant material. Nevertheless, the scientific literature provided information on diagnostic procedures, treatment modalities, treatment plans and clinical outcomes for various conditions. The controlled trial and the randomized controlled trial provided information only on diagnostic procedures and treatment modalities (see Additional file 3 for details). Moreover, two case studies



did not report the treatment plan and, another case study did not report the brain areas targeted by the treatment. There was no disagreement between the two authors who independently collected the information from the scientific literature.

Websites

The search for information on the internet was saturated fairly quickly. We did not find any new information after reading the full content of the first five websites on Google. These all belonged to chiropractors practicing in the United States. The internet search provided particular information on the indications, diagnostic procedures, and treatment plans. Only one website provided information on treatment in relation to a specifically targeted area in the brain. Furthermore, the websites generally gave only general information about the expected outcomes following FN treatment. One website did not provide information about the diagnostic tests used by the chiropractors and two websites did not provide relevant information related to treatment plans except to say that they were individualized.

Interviews

The first interview lacked somewhat in clarity and thus served as a pilot interview. However, the following three interviews provided clear and extensive answers to our questions. All four interviews could be used in this study as they provided fairly homogeneous information. Therefore it was deemed unnecessary to collect data from additional practitioners. The transcripts sent to the participants needed only few minor revisions on their part; three of them gave us feedback. The interviews informed us mainly about indications, diagnostic tests, and treatment modalities. We were able to collect less information related to treatment plans (3/4 informants) and expected outcomes, for which only general information was provided. The tabulated transcriptions (available in Additional file 2c) made by the first author and the other PhD student revealed no obvious difference in their content.

In the section below, the theories of FN are reported first in relation to the neurophysiology, thereafter in terms of treatment implementations. This work aims to provide a basic description of these theories and does not pretend to cover them in depth. Although we attempted to report these theories of FN faithfully, the text below represents our understanding of FN derived from this study, which does not necessarily depict the official view of FN. Finally, the five different aspects of the clinical applications of FN are discussed, based on our four sources of information.

Detailed results

Neurophysiological theories: (information from textbook)

The practice of FN includes the detection, evaluation and conservative treatment of functional aberrations of the neuraxis, especially of the brain [32]. Within FN, neurological aberrations are named “physiological lesions” or “functional lesions”. They are stated to be the cause of a large number of unlabeled, poorly labeled or misunderstood symptoms in the medical field (e.g. neurodevelopmental disorders, movement disorders) [33]. By the same reasoning, FN proposes explanations also for musculoskeletal disorders.

These “physiological lesions” are described as reversible due to the neuroplastic properties of the nervous system and may affect any parts of the nervous system. “Physiological lesions” are different from “ablative lesions” that are defined as only potentially and very slowly reversible, as they have resulted from death of neuronal tissues (e.g. post-stroke). These two types of lesions would lead to very similar symptoms and could co-exist [34].

The textbook information on the neurophysiological rationale of FN can be broadly classified under three headings:

1. Cellular level,
2. Related neurological pathways,
3. The FN concept of “hemisphericity”.

For each of these, we found:

1. A description and interpretation of core neurophysiological and/or neuroanatomical information,
2. A description of consequences when the neurophysiology goes wrong (possible disorders and symptoms), which, may or may not represent the generally acceptable view in the scientific world,
3. Methods to test the integrity of various groups of neurons, most often indirectly, especially those located in the brain.

Some of the major components of the theoretical framework of FN will be reported following the above classification.

Cellular level: (information from textbook)

At a cellular level, the central tenet of FN is that symptoms result from a dysfunctional “central integrative state” (CIS) of one or several functional units of neurons within the nervous system (e.g. group of neurons of the right dentate nucleus). In other words, a “physiological lesion” corresponds to a group of neurons with a dysfunctional CIS. More precisely, such lesions would occur



following disturbances of neuronal physiology that in turn would affect communication within the central nervous system, leading to hyper and/or hypo-functional area(s) within certain areas of the brain. In response to this altered function, the concerned area(s) would send an abnormal quantity of outputs, i.e. too many or not enough, causing diverse motor, sensory, visceral or cognitive symptoms such as the ones listed in Table 2 and discussed later in this text [34]. In general, a “physiological lesion” is said to affect only one side of a brain structure (e.g. one side of the cerebellum or one cortical hemisphere), leading to asymmetries of outputs

(aspect discussed later in section “The FN concept of “hemisphericity””).

The CIS of a functional group of neurons appears to be considered as the “state of health” of those neurons. This state is said to be determined by three parameters that allow the survival and function of neurons: i) oxygen supply, ii) nutritional supply, and iii) stimulation, i.e. synaptic activation [34]. These three parameters have to be in an adequate amount to ensure a “healthy” CIS. Many factors, mainly external, would negatively modify the state of health of a functional group of neurons. An immobilization in a cast, an acute anoxic episode after

Table 2 Indications for treatment using Functional Neurology according to four sources in a scoping review

Groups and/or subgroups of conditions		Source of information			
		Book	Articles	Websites	Interviews
Neuromusculoskeletal disorders	Headaches	NM	NM	X	X
	Others	Low back pain with radiculopathy Peripheral neuropathies	Low back pain Neck pain Ankle pain	Low back pain Radiculopathies Neck pain Peripheral neuropathies Spinal stenosis Upper/lower extremity conditions	Low back pain Radiculopathies Neck pain
Traumatic brain injuries (symptom(s) related to such injuries)		X	X	X	X
Neurological diseases or disorders	Neurodegenerative disease	Parkinson's disease	Parkinson's disease	Parkinson's disease Multiple sclerosis Alzheimer's disease	Parkinson's disease Multiple sclerosis
	Movement disorders	Dystonias	Cervical dystonia	Dystonia Tremor disorders	Dystonia
	Post-stroke symptoms	X	NM	X	X
	Others	Migraines Complex regional pain syndrome Dysautonomia	Migraines Complex regional pain syndrome Landau Kleffner syndrome	Migraines Seizure disorders Spinal cord lesions Fibromyalgia Restless legs	Migraines
Psychiatric disorders	Neurodevelopmental disorders	ADHD	ADHD	ADD/ADHD Dyslexia Autism	ADD/ADHD « dys » disorders, including dyslexia
	Mood disorders	Anxiety Depression	NM ^a	Anxiety disorders Depression	NM
	Others	OCD	OCD Tourette's syndrome	OCD PTSD	PTSD
Various neurological and non-neurological symptoms	Tinnitus Deafness Muscle spasms Post manipulative therapy symptoms	Paresthesia	Balance disorders Vertigo Numbness Sleeping difficulties	Balance disorders Vertigo	
Others	Oral dysplasia	Primary nocturnal enuresis	Physical, cognitive, academic and/or creativity enhancement Lyme disease	NM	

NM Condition(s) not mentioned

X Condition(s) mentioned without specific example(s)

ADD/ADHD Attention deficit disorder / attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder

OCD Obsessive compulsive disorder

PTSD Post-traumatic stress disorder

^aOne reviewed article deals with mood disorders in a context of multiple symptoms related to traumatic brain injury



attempting suicide, or an inappropriately performed spinal manipulation are examples of such proposed external factors [35, 36].

Evaluating the CIS of the different units of neurons of the central nervous system, especially those of the brain, is the central aim of the clinical examination within FN. As it cannot be performed directly, it is mainly evaluated through a detailed analysis of the responses of different effectors tested during the patient's examination. These responses are proposed to be, to a large extent, determined by the CIS of the presynaptic neuronal pool(s) projecting to the neurons ending at the tested effector. A major sign of a dysfunctional CIS is described as a "fatigability" of the tested neurons, which means that the response to a continued or repeated stimulus cannot be sustained as it should [33]. An effector has to be tested bilaterally in order to find the faulty side, because of the concept of asymmetrical function of two parts of a brain structure. In addition, as a "physiological lesion" can result in symptoms qualified as "subclinical", functional neurologists have to attempt to detect "minor" asymmetries. This concept, in FN that "minor" asymmetries are clinically relevant, makes up one of the big differences between FN and classical neurology [33].

Related neurological pathways: (information from textbook)

To assess the CIS of one or several neuronal units and to elaborate an individualized treatment plan, solid knowledge in neuroanatomy is needed, as a "physiological lesion" could occur at any point along a neural pathway. Some pathways are identified as being of particular importance to a FN assessment, such as the cortico-reticulo-spinal tract that is described as beginning at a cortical hemisphere, passing mainly through the ipsilateral pontomedullary reticular formation (PMRF) and terminating, for most of the fibers, in the ipsilateral spinal cord [34]. We will use this particular pathway as an example to illustrate FN reasoning.

For functional neurologists, the importance of this pathway would relate to its following roles:

- Ipsilateral facilitation of muscle tone,
- Ipsilateral inhibition of anterior muscles above the spinal level of T6 and of posterior muscles below T6,
- Ipsilateral inhibition of pain sensation,
- Ipsilateral inhibition of sympathetic nervous system.

These functions are described as the result of the normal activation of the PMRF by the ipsilateral cerebral cortex.

In fact, this is a key pathway in FN, said to become disturbed if a "physiological lesion" on one side of the brain, in FN named "hemisphericity", decreases the PMRF outputs. This decrease is described to be due to

the decrease of the cortical outputs to the PMRF. Clinically, this would lead to:

- A global ipsilateral decrease of muscle tone,
- A "flexor angulation" of the ipsilateral upper limb and an "extensor angulation" of the ipsilateral lower limb, a posture known in FN as "pyramidal paresis",
- One or more ipsilateral pain syndrome(s),
- An ipsilateral increase of sympathetic activity leading to a number of autonomic signs (e.g. increase of blood pressure, increased sweating, large pupil size) [34].

Combined, these clinical signs indicate that the patient would suffer from a "hemisphericity", further discussed below.

The FN concept of "hemisphericity": (information from textbook)

The concept of "hemisphericity" (also termed "cortical lateralization" or "brain asymmetry") appears to be specific to FN, referring to a cerebral hemisphere suffering from a dysfunctional CIS. Thus, this is a "physiological lesion" that does not refer to a recognized pathological lesion such as a brain lesion caused by a stroke. Usually, it describes the side where the cortical activity is stated to be decreased. Within the FN framework, this concept rests on the assumptions that the two hemispheres: i) control different body functions, and ii) can function at two different levels of activation without there being an obvious pathology [34].

Widespread consequences are thought to result from this one-sided "physiological lesion", including: cognitive (e.g. attention deficit disorder / attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder), psychiatric (e.g. depression), motor (e.g. muscle weakness), immune (e.g. systematic lupus erythematosus), and autonomic manifestations [32] (e.g. asymmetry of blood pressure). It is also considered that "hemisphericity" may lead to spinal manifestations and conditions such as: "subluxation", modifications of the spinal curves, spondylosis, muscle stiffness, and muscles weakness of the intrinsic spinal muscles [34]. Such diagnoses, symptoms, or findings orientate the functional neurologist to the side of the dysfunctional hemisphere.

In addition to these clinical manifestations and to signs evoked above in relation to disturbance of the control of the PMRF outputs, other signs could be searched for and additional tests performed to diagnose a "hemisphericity". Among them there are:

- Eye movement dysfunction(s),
- Contralateral cerebellar sign(s),



- Contralateral enlargement of the physiological blind spot of the eye, an, apparently, original concept of FN (see [9] or [33] for details about measurement of the physiological blind spot).

In fact, any neurological dysfunction that can be related somehow to aberrant cortical outputs is considered potentially relevant [37].

The concept of the physiological blind spot deserves some explanation because it belongs to the history of FN. In classical textbooks, the blind spot (optic disc) is described as the area of the retina devoid of photoreceptors, i.e. the area where converging retinal ganglion cells exit the eyeball to form the optic nerve. The perimeter of the blind spot can be mapped out during the examination of the visual field to detect some eye pathologies and to follow their progress [38]. However, FR Carrick [9] presents the claim that, in the absence of an eye pathology, the size of the blind spot can be altered in response to the CIS of the visual cortex and, by extension, the CIS of one hemisphere, which in turn would depend to a large extent of the afferent inputs it receives from the thalamus through the thalamocortical radiations. Related to this concept, spinal manipulation occupies a prominent place in FN, principally because of its proposed supra-segmental effects. Indeed, it is stated that spinal manipulation is able to generate changes in the size of the blind spot because of the afferent stimulation it would provide to the thalamus, in this way affecting the amount of afferent inputs to the cortex by the thalamus. Thus, manipulation is stated to have a direct effect on the brain, a central tenet within FN [32, 34]. This leads us to discuss the theories surrounding the treatment in FN.

Treatment theories: (information from textbook)

The aim of FN treatment is to restore the optimal metabolism within the targeted neurons, i.e. the neurons constituting the “physiological lesion(s)”, in order to promote positive neuroplastic changes. By this process, normalization of their efferent outputs and thus a resolution (at least partial) of the patient’s symptoms is expected. This treatment is often multi-faceted and could include manual therapy but also the application of, for example, sensory, motor, or cognitive stimuli. Some such treatments were described in our four sources of information and were reported below in the section “Treatment modalities”.

Some rules are proposed to be followed for implementing a treatment in FN, specifically that: 1) the intensity of the stimulus has to be progressive and adapted to the degree of “fatigability” of the targeted group(s) of neurons; 2) the type of the stimuli and the side of their application depend on the characteristics of

the stimulated pathways; 3) the stimuli have to be repeated and a single “physiological lesion” can be affected by several kinds of stimuli; and 4) the effects of treatment have to be assessed regularly by testing the positive indicators found during the initial clinical examination (e.g. assessing the decrease or the increase of “fatigability”) [39].

Concerning the intensity of the stimulus and the necessity of reassessing regularly the “fatigability” of the patient’s nervous system, in FN it is considered that neurons suffering from a dysfunctional CIS may be not able to support either an overly intense stimulation or too many repetitions of stimuli. The risk would be to aggravate the “physiological lesion(s)” [34]. This implies that parameters such as the “fatigability” of a group of neurons vary during treatment, appearing as a barometer of the treatment dose that the patient would be able to support.

In regards to the type and side of stimulation, these parameters refer to the fact that a variety of treatment modalities exist for acting on various parts of the nervous system. The choice of the type of stimuli depends on the targeted group(s) of neurons. The side on which they are delivered depends on whether the pathway that goes to the targeted neurons is crossed or uncrossed. In other words, a treatment modality is chosen for its expected ability to alter neuronal communication along a pathway until it reaches the “physiological lesion” of interest. For example, to reverse a “physiological lesion” of the left parietal cortex, the application of a source of vibration to joints of the right side of the body may be chosen [40]. Finally, the stimuli have to be repeated in the perspective of re-training the nervous system in order to cause lasting neuroplastic changes. The treatment is therefore dependent on the assumed area(s) of the defect nervous system and thus the same treatment can be provided for a multitude of diagnoses/symptoms.

Clinical application of FN: (information from all four sources)

Indications: (information from all four sources)

All the groups of indications we identified were found in at least three of our four sources of information. Indications of FN are multiple with an emphasis on brain-related dysfunctions. Thus, according to our four sources, FN would be suitable to manage neuromusculoskeletal disorders, symptoms related to traumatic brain injuries, neurologic diseases or disorders, psychiatric disorders, and various neurologic or non-neurologic isolated symptoms. In addition, three sources showed that this approach would also be suitable for various conditions which did not fit with any of these groups of indications (see Table 2).



Among these indications, the following specific examples were reported by at least two sources: low back pain, neck pain, radiculopathies, peripheral neuropathies, upper and lower extremity conditions, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, dystonias, migraines, complex regional pain syndrome, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders (OCD), balance disorders, and vertigo. Additional indications are listed in Table 2. In fact, several specific examples collected on the websites or through the interviews were apparently not reported in the literature.

Examination procedures: (information from all four sources)

As in other health disciplines, a detailed medical history is collected and the patient is observed, thus providing the first clues about which areas of the nervous system may present a physiological dysfunction. In addition, vital signs may be assessed and a general physical examination can be conducted. Complementary exams, e.g. magnetic resonance imaging and video-nystagmography, can also be recommended in order to detect/exclude a severe pathology and/or to supplement the functional neurological diagnosis.

However, the main aspect is the functional neurology examination. Table 3 provides a summary of diagnostic procedures used in FN according to our four sources. All of them reported the use of tests to assess the following: autonomic nervous system, sensory and motor components of spinal nerves, cranial nerves, reflexes, vestibulo-cerebellar system, cortical lobes and/or hemispheres, and cognition. The majority also reported assessing the basal ganglia. Specific tests are also mentioned, some of which are used to assess several structures or functions. For example, eye movements are used to assess the vestibulo-cerebellar system, the brainstem and/or the cerebral cortex, and finger-to-nose test is used for assessing the cerebellum and/or indirectly the cortical hemispheres.

Importantly, while most of the tests reported in Table 3 are commonly used in conventional neurological examination (e.g. myotomes and Romberg's test) or in non-neurological examinations (e.g. vital signs), some of them are unusual or used differently in FN. The blind spot mapping is an example of such an unusual diagnostic test. The measurement of the vital signs to assess the CIS of the autonomic nervous system, which in turn is said to be able to reflect the CIS of cortical hemispheres, is an example of usual tests used and interpreted differently to what would usually be the case. This relationship between vital signs, autonomic nervous system and the CIS of the cortical hemispheres is said to be mediated by the cortico-reticulo-spinal tract (described in the section "Related neurological pathways").

Tests may be used also without any obvious clinical indication and the interpretation of their results appears to be specific to FN, i.e. identification of one or more "physiological lesions". The assessment of the cerebellar functions in a context of mechanical low back pain with spinal root compression illustrates the apparent "gap" between the clinical condition and the tests selected by the therapist [36]. In other words, to an "ordinary" clinician it would not be clear in which way tests of the cerebellar function would be relevant in mechanical low back pain.

It is our understanding that clinicians may take an individual approach to their diagnostic tests; either choosing specific tests based on the initial interview and observation of the patient or performing tests in order to screen for affected areas of the nervous system. It also appears that all tests are not used by all FN clinicians.

Treatment modalities: (information from all four sources)

Treatment modalities mentioned by our sources of information, as listed in Table 4, are coupled with the parts of the nervous system they are proposed to affect. As previously stated, treatment modalities appear to be primarily selected for their expected abilities to stimulate brain area(s) rather than in relation to the patient's condition. The table shows how one brain area may be stimulated by several approaches and how one treatment modality may stimulate several areas. For example, eye movement exercises and manual therapy may be used to stimulate both the cortical hemispheres and the cerebellum. Another example is vibration therapy that may be used for these same areas, i.e. the cortical hemispheres and the cerebellum, as well as for the basal ganglia. In fact, the therapeutic modalities appear to include almost anything that would stimulate the nervous system, making it difficult to describe a treatment pattern. This treatment often includes home exercises to regularly stimulate the nervous system and it is often complemented with nutritional counseling or supplements. All the sources described the content of the treatment as individualized.

Treatment plans: (information from scientific literature, websites and interviews)

Concerning the treatment plans, we analyzed information from three sources (the book was excluded). On this basis, it seems clear that treatment plans are individualized. During the initial treatment period, regardless the conditions discussed, several appointments per week or even per day were proposed to patients. The period during which these treatment sessions are planned is variable but typically extended two weeks. Moreover, the use of home exercises appears quite common in addition to treatment with the therapist. Very little information is



Table 3 Diagnostic procedures used in Functional Neurology according to four sources in a scoping review

Structure(s) or function(s)		Sources of information			
		Book	Scientific articles	Websites	Interviews
Spinal nerve	Sensory	Spinothalamic tract ^a Dorsal columns ^b	Spinothalamic tract ^a Dorsal columns ^b	X	X
	Motor	Myotomes Muscle tone	Myotomes	Myotomes	X
	Reflexes	Osteotendinous Plantar Superficial abdominal	Osteotendinous Plantar	X	Osteotendinous
Cranial nerves	I to XII		At least, II to VIII, X to XII	At least, III, IV, VI, and VIII	I to XII
Vestibulo-cerebellar	Eye movements CN II, III, V, VII and, VIII to XII Romberg / Fukuda tests Finger-to-nose / Heel-to-shin tests Rapid alternative movements Vestibulo-ocular reflex Balance assessment Tandem gait Walking on toes / heels		Eye movements Finger-to-nose / Heel-to-shin tests Rapid alternative movements Vestibulo-ocular reflex Balance assessment Functional Romberg test	Eye movements Balance assessment	Eye movements Romberg / Fukuda tests Vestibulo-ocular reflex Balance assessment
Brain lobe(s)	Eye movements Blind spot mapping qEEG		Eye movements Blind spot mapping Gait assessment Finger dexterity Muscle testing Primitive reflexes Dual mental tasking	Eye movements Blind spot mapping	Eye movements Blind spot mapping
Basal ganglia	Looking for fascial tics		Colored lenses	NM	X
Autonomic	Observation (e.g. pupillary size, condition of the skin) Pupil light reflex Blood pressure Forehead / tympanic temperatures Heart rate Respiratory rate / ratio Oximetry Bowel auscultation Dermographia Vein-to-artery ratio of the retinal vessel		Blood pressure Heart rate Heart auscultation "Respiratory excursion" Vein-to-artery ratio of the retinal vessel Search for dermographia	X	Pupillary size or pupil light reflex Blood pressure Heart rate Oximetry
Cognitive	Questions about patient's orientation and for testing memory		Wechsler intelligence scale for children Test of variables of attention Finger tapping test Cognitive tasks (e.g. memory tasks)	X	Test of variables of attention

X Structure(s) or function(s) mentioned without specific example(s)

NM Structure(s) or function(s) not mentioned in the source

qEEG Quantitative electroencephalography

^aThis includes nondiscriminative touch, temperature and pain sensations

^bThis includes fine touch, and conscious proprioception

given in regard to the long-term strategies of care that might be established. This information and some details related to the course of care (e.g. duration of treatment sessions or home exercises) are available in Table 5.

Clinical outcomes: (information from all four sources)

Finally, we were interested in the factual or expected clinical outcomes. This is reported in the order of the scientific "credibility" of the sources. In general, websites and informants reported for various conditions, relief or

recovery, but most of the time without mentioning the usual time course of recovery/improvement (see Table 6).

The textbook [36] reported on six different cases: i) complex regional pain syndrome, ii) migraines associated with vertigo, iii) ADHD, iv) depression, v) low back pain with spinal root compression, and vi) symptoms related to treatment by spinal manipulation. For these patients, clinical outcomes were reported as positive in general after twelve weeks, whether partial or complete. No clinical outcomes were reported beyond this period of treatment.



Table 4 Treatment modalities used in Functional Neurology according to four sources in a scoping review

Sources of information	Conditions or signs	Tissues at fault	Therapeutic modalities	Specific comments	General comments
Book					
Chap.19	Migraines and vertigo	Right cerebral hemisphere	SMT Eye exercises Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		Most of the treatment modalities (e.g. SMT, sound therapy, eye exercises) are provided or performed to the opposite side of the targeted hemisphere.
	Complex regional pain syndrome	Cerebral hemisphere(s)	Joint manipulations Counting backwards Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy Hot and cold compresses Orthotics	The targeted hemisphere is probably the left, because counting backwards is said by the author to stimulate the left cerebral hemisphere.	Nutritional therapy consists mainly of vitamin B, omega 3 and COQ10 supplementation.
	Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder	Right cerebral hemisphere and left cerebellum	Joint manipulations Sound therapy Spatial rearrangement exercises Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		
	Depression	Cerebral cortex	Joint manipulations Sound therapy Spatial rearrangement exercises Looking at old photos and making up stories about them Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		
	Low back pain with spinal root compression	Right cerebral hemisphere	Joint manipulations Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		
	Post SMT symptoms	Right cerebral hemisphere and left vestibulo-cerebellar system	Joint manipulations Soft tissue and trigger point therapy Breathing exercises Nutritional therapy		
Chap.20	NA	Cerebral hemisphere	Activation: Any complex chore Manipulative therapy Eye exercises Cerebellar activation Sensory stimuli: visual, auditory, olfactory Transcutaneous electrical neural stimulation Inhibition: Earplugs, blinders Visualize rather than perform activities	Some specific stimuli to stimulate the right and the left cerebral cortex are described. Moreover, some specific stimuli directed for the different lobes of the hemispheres are also described [39]. Stimuli directed to the cerebellum are described below.	In Chap. 20, the author does not deal with conditions but only with targeted neurological structures.



Table 4 Treatment modalities used in Functional Neurology according to four sources in a scoping review (Continued)

Scientific articles	NA	Cerebellum	Evoked potentials at reduced amplitude	Specific exercises to stimulate the medial part and the lateral part of the cerebellum are also proposed [39].
Carrick (1997) [9]	NA	Cerebellum	Manipulative therapy Warming the auditory canal Revolving chair Eye movements Passive muscle stretch Squeezing a ball Pointing	For details concerning these exercises, see [39].
Pedro (2005) [41]	NA	Vestibule	Cawthorne-Cooksey exercises Balance exercises	Specific exercises to stimulate the mesencephalon are also mentioned [39].
Landau-Kleffner (2005) [41]	NA	Brainstem	Smell and/or taste food Exercises and/or stimuli of muscles innervated by cranial nerves Rectal dilation	These modalities are described to inhibit the sympathetic activity.
Daubeny (2010) [57]	NA	Sympathetic activity	Local application of warm Transcutaneous electrical neural stimulation	In contrast, amygdala and/or hippocampus may be stimulated by visualizing unpleasant stimuli and "narrative recall" and list learning.
Bova (2013) [43]	NA	Caudate nucleus	Visualizing pleasant stimuli	There was no precision of which modalities would alter one of the two targeted structure rather than the other.
Kuhn (2013) [44]	NA	Cerebral hemisphere	SMT	except in the articles of Pedro (2005) (where this is not mentioned) and of Hlsh (2013) (where this is only mentioned for vibration therapy). ^b These studies were conducted on healthy subjects who were found with an enlarged blind spot of one of their eyes.
	Enlarged physiological blind spot	Cerebral hemisphere and right cerebellum	Manipulation Eye movement exercises Visual, olfactory, auditory, vestibular and somatosensory stimuli Interactive metronome Nutrition therapy Upper extremity manipulations	
	Enlarged physiological blind spot	Cerebral hemisphere	Eye movement exercises	
	Cervical dystonia	Left cerebral cortex (frontal lobe) Right cerebellum Right vestibular system Left basal ganglia	SMT Vibration therapy Eye movement exercises Eye movement exercises Vibration therapy Blue-lensed glasses	
	Migraines, attention deficit and hyperactivity	Right cortical hemisphere	SMT Coordination activities associated with eye movements	



Table 4 Treatment modalities used in Functional Neurology according to four sources in a scoping review (Continued)

				Interactive metronome	
	disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and Tourette's syndrome	Left cerebellum		SMT Coordination activities associated with eye movements Interactive metronome	
		Right basal ganglia		SMT Coordination activities associated with eye movements Interactive metronome	
		Left pons		SMT Coordination activities associated with eye movements	
Hirsh (2013) [46]	Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, primary nocturnal enuresis and musculoskeletal pain	Right cortical hemisphere and left cerebellum		SMT Blue-lensed-glasses Optokinetic stimulation Vibration therapy Balance exercises Vestibular stimulation Timing exercises, including interactive metronome Home exercises: inhibitory of primitive reflexes, muscles strengthening, and balance exercises. Dietary changes	There was no precision of which modalities would alter one of the two targeted structure rather than the other.
Esposito (2013) [48]	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury	Cortex (including frontal lobe) Vestibule Right lower brainstem Left upper brainstem Superior colliculi Cerebral cortex		Off-axis rotational device Off-axis rotational device Off-axis rotational device Red-blue-lenses SMT Mirror therapy	Other modalities are used (see Additional file 2a) without clear mention of which neurological areas are targeted.
Bova (2014) [45]	Parkinson's disease	Basal ganglia		Gross crawl exercises Mirror therapy Vibration therapy Blue-lensed glasses Mirror therapy	Cross crawl exercises are performed to stimulate the frontal lobe. Mesencephalon was also targeted without any mention of what modalities were used for. SMT and cold laser therapy were also used.
Bova (2014) [40]	Idiopathic hemiparesis	Left cerebral cortex (parietal lobe) Left vestibular system		Vibration therapy Eye exercises	
Traster (2014) [47]	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury	Left cerebral hemisphere		Manipulative therapy Passive complex movements of the extremities Eye movement therapies Earth-vertical axis rotations	Breathing exercises were also given to the patient.



Table 4 Treatment modalities used in Functional Neurology according to four sources in a scoping review (Continued)

Source	Website	Informant	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injuries	Overall vestibule	Vestibular system	Left brainstem (including the left superior colliculus)	Optokinetic stimulations	Eye movement therapies Earth-vertical axis rotations	Off-axis rotational device	Notes
Interviews	1	Informant 1	NA	Temporal lobe(s)			Riding a bike			The content of each treatment is individualized, following the statements of the five websites. All of the practitioners resort to eye exercises and to home exercises and/or lifestyle counseling, especially concerning nutrition (see Additional file 2b).
	2	Informant 2	NA	Cerebral hemisphere			Manipulative therapy			The content of each treatment is described as individualized.
	3	Informant 3	Symptoms following traumatic brain injuries	Brainstem			Somatosensory evoked potential			All the informants resort to home exercises. The majority of them use manipulative therapy and eye exercises (see Additional file 2c).
Websites	4	Website 4	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injuries	Cerebral hemisphere			Manipulative therapy			The majority of them use manipulative therapy and eye exercises (see Additional file 2c).
				Cerebellum			Coordination exercises and fine motor skills			Coordination exercises and fine motor skills are performed to stimulate the lateral part of the cerebellum.

SMT Spinal manual therapy
NA Not applicable



Table 5 Treatment plans used in Functional Neurology according to four sources in a scoping review

Sources of information	Condition(s)	Initial care	Maintenance care	
Articles	Pedro (2005) [41]	Landau Kleffner syndrome	Daily visits, 4.5 h per week, for 12 weeks	
	Beck (2009) [42]	Complex regional pain syndrome	1 to 2 visits per week for 8 weeks, plus 1 visit each 2 week for 1 month, plus home exercises	
	Kuhn (2013) [44]	Migraines, ADHD, OCD and, Tourette's syndrome	42 visits over 19 weeks	
	Hirsh (2013) [46]	ADHD, primary nocturnal enuresis, and musculoskeletal pain	36 visits over 18 weeks, plus daily home exercises	
	Bova (2014) [45]	Parkinson's disease	2 visits per week for 2 months, plus home exercises	After the initial care (i.e. 2 months), the frequency of 2 visits per week was maintained (for at least 8 months).
	Bova (2014) [40]	Idiopathic hemiparesis	3 visits in 2 weeks	
	Traster (2014) [47]	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury	Approximately 2 to 3 visits per week for 3 months	
Websites	Website 1	In general	Individualized Usually, several times per day with an average of 3 times of 1.5 h each, for 1 to 2 weeks	
	Website 4	In general	Individualized Usually, 2 times per week for 6 weeks, plus home exercises	
		Complex conditions (type of conditions was not specified)	3 to 5 times per day for up to 5 consecutive days	
	Website 5	In general	Individualized Usually, 1 to 3 times per week for few weeks, plus home exercises This frequency is usually decreased over 2 to 4 months	Patient is often requested to do home exercises.
Interviews	Informant 1	In general	Individualized Usually 2 to 3 visits close in time, plus home exercises	
		Complex conditions (unspecified)	If good results are obtained, treatment is continued, more spaced in time. Daily visits or, 2 to 3 visits per week, may be needed, for 2 to 3 weeks.	
	Informant 2	Moderate neurodevelopmental disorders	Individualized Usually, 1 to 2 visits per week for a few weeks, plus daily home exercises for about 10 min per day This frequency is usually progressively decreased	
		Severe neurodevelopmental disorders	Visits are more frequent than for the moderate form.	
	Informant 4	In general	Individualized Usually, 3 to 4 times (about 20 min each) per day for 2 to 3 weeks or 2 times per week for 3 to 4 months	
	Parkinson's disease	Several visits per day for 3 consecutive days for 1 week	Patient is seen 3 to 4 times per year for the same treatment plan.	

ADHD Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
 OCD Obsessive compulsive disorder



Table 6 Clinical outcomes reported and/or expected after treatment with Functional Neurological according to four sources in a scoping review

Sources of information	Conditions	Early clinical outcomes	Clinical outcomes with unspecified time frame	Long-term clinical outcomes
Book				
Chapter 19 p.332–341	Complex regional pain syndrome	At 12 weeks, full recovery of function, persistence of bouts of pain		
	Migraines and vertigo	Less frequent migraines, resolution of vertigo		
	ADHD	At 12 weeks, improvement of concentration, reading ability and other academic abilities	<i>Further improvement is expected.</i>	
	Depression	At 12 weeks, improvement of depressive state	<i>Further improvement is expected with continued treatment.</i>	
	Low back pain with spinal root compression	At 12 weeks, pain free, but persistent episodes of numbness		
	Post manipulative therapy symptoms	At 12 weeks, resolution of imbalance and headaches, reduction of the other symptoms including confusion	<i>Further improvement or even resolution is expected with continued treatment.</i>	
Articles				
Pedro (2005) [41]	Landau-Kleffner syndrome (case report)	At 12 weeks, improvement of language, auditory and motor skills		
Beck (2009) [42]	Complex regional pain syndrome (case report)	At 12 weeks, full recovery of function, but persistence of bouts of pain		At 1 year, functional recovery is maintained, episodes of pain are reported.
Bova (2013) [43]	Cervical dystonia (case report)		Functional improvement, decrease of spasmodic torticollis	
Kuhn (2013) [44]	Migraines, ADHD, OCD, Tourette's syndrome (case report)	At 19 weeks, migraines were gone, tics and learning and behavioral capacities were improved		
Hirsh (2013) [46]	ADHD, primary nocturnal enuresis, and musculoskeletal pain (case report)	At 18 weeks, improvement of behavior, confidence, and posture No more difficulty in daytime urinary control		At 3 months, occasional bed wetting and improvements in various activities of daily living
Esposito (2013) [48]	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury (case report)	At 10 weeks, improvement of balance, cognitive abilities, mood, and anxiety Decrease of the number and severity of physical complaints		
Bova (2014) [45]	Parkinson's disease (case report)	At 2 months, improvement of posture, function and well-being		At 10 months, treatment is continued twice per week for maintenance care with stable results. NB: Relapse was observed when treatment was reduced to once per week.
Bova (2014) [40]	Idiopathic paresthesia (case report)	At 2 weeks, symptom free after 2 visits		
Traster (2014) [47]	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury (case report)			



Table 6 Clinical outcomes reported and/or expected after treatment with Functional Neurological according to four sources in a scoping review (Continued)

Source	Condition	Outcomes
At 3 months, recovery of vibration sense, free of dysesthesia, and improvement of balance and gait		
Websites	Website 1	Unspecified
	Website 2	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury
	Website 3	Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and ADD / ADHD
	Website 4	Unspecified
	Website 5	Unspecified
	Website 6	Migraines, and Post-concussion symptoms
	Website 7	Unspecified
	Website 8	Unspecified
Interviews	Informant 1	Most of the conditions
	Informant 2	Vertigo Tinnitus
	Informant 3	Neurodegenerative diseases, tremor disorders, high "fatigability" of the nervous system
	Informant 4	Reversible or "functional" conditions (eg. vertigo, balance issues, headaches) Irreversible conditions
	Informant 5	Most of the conditions
	Informant 6	Any pediatric conditions (eg. ADD, cerebral palsy), and post-stroke symptoms, and chronic musculoskeletal disorders
	Informant 7	Improvements of patient's symptom(s), usually after 2 to 3 visits
	Informant 8	"Good", usually after 2 to 3 visits
	Informant 9	Less constant, usually after 2 to 3 visits
	Informant 10	"Good", usually after 2 to 3 weeks of treatment
	Informant 11	Less constant and longer to observe
	Informant 12	Results concerning some of the symptom(s) of the patient's pathology, take longer to achieve, and stable with maintenance care.
	Informant 13	Improvement, usually transitory, of some of the patient's symptom(s)
	Informant 14	Results are better than those described for the other conditions in adults. For children, results are also more stable.

Expected clinical outcomes are reported in *italics*
 ADD/ADHD Attention deficit disorder/Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
 OCD Obsessive compulsive disorders



We found seven case studies in the literature reporting on: i) Landau-Kleffner syndrome [41], ii) complex regional pain syndrome [42], iii) cervical dystonia [43], iv) migraines, ADHD, OCD and Tourette's syndrome [44], v) Parkinson's disease [45], vi) idiopathic hemi-paresthesia [40], and vii) ADHD, primary nocturnal enuresis and musculoskeletal pain [46]. Two case studies were found that reported on symptoms post-traumatic brain injury [47, 48]. For these case reports, clinical outcomes were reported at various time intervals as positive, whether partial [41–48] or complete [40, 42, 44, 47]. Two case studies [42, 45] reported long term clinical outcomes, both describing patients as improved. One case study [46] reports the outcomes three months after cessation of care, describing the patient as being improved. No randomized controlled trials were found that could confirm the therapeutic effect of FN approach as a supplement to “traditional” chiropractic on any clinical outcome (for more information see Table 6). In fact, to the authors' knowledge, no study design other than case-reports currently exist that describe therapeutic outcome in symptomatic patients.

Discussion

Brief summary of findings

To our knowledge, this is the first article to provide an overview of the theoretical framework and the clinical applications of FN, in the context of chiropractic manual therapy. In short, FN is described as a therapeutic approach that could be used for a large array of conditions, provided that the cause of such conditions can be traced primarily to parts of the central nervous system. The diagnosis is performed through the use of many conventional, but also more unusual tests, with a very “fine-tuned” interpretation of test results. In some cases, the fine tuning consists of looking for minor asymmetry and “subclinical lesions”. Treatment consists of various activities or therapies that are thought to affect clusters of neurons that have been diagnosed as dysfunctional. The initial treatment plan appears intense with several sessions per week or even per day. After this initial intervention period, it seems that the clinical outcomes are generally reported as positive, whether partial or complete, regardless of the condition of the patient (e.g. Parkinson's disease, low back pain with radiculopathy).

Methodological considerations

This information was obtained through a scoping review that included four sources: i) one textbook of FN, ii) eleven articles from the scientific literature, iii) the websites of five chiropractors proficient in FN, and iv) a semi-structured interview of four chiropractors who practice FN daily. As our research purpose

was broad and FN is not well documented in the scientific or academic literature, we performed a scoping review rather than a number of rigorous systematic reviews, using for this multiple sources of information.

Our four sources helped us cover our six research objectives. However, the book was the only material that we used for the theoretical background of FN as it extensively informed us on its fundamental concepts. Few scientific articles were found in relation to our areas of inquiry; most of them case studies. Thus, websites of FN practitioners and the interviews were needed to collect enough information to make it possible to provide a clear and consistent picture of what constitutes FN. The latter two sources, i.e. websites and interviews, were also selected to fit the recommendations for conducting scoping studies [27, 28].

The representativeness of our sources of information and the validity of the extruded information seem to be satisfactory, as discussed below. Perhaps other researchers using alternative sources of information may have obtained varying results but it is our opinion that this review has reasonably captured the spirit and nature of FN, as there was good agreement between the various sources.

We decided to restrict the present review to FN theories and their clinical applications in the chiropractic context, i.e. we were interested only in sources that included the use of manual therapy. Thus, the work presented here does not depict the whole field of FN, which is wide and merits further explorations. As reported in the introduction, FN is currently composed of different sub-specialties which represent various forms of FN practice. These do not always include manual therapy but choose other therapeutic strategies, for example eye movement training [49–51], “hemisphere specific remediation programs” [52, 53], and music therapy [54].

i) Textbook

Only the first author read the entire book and collected the relevant information for our work, which may be a methodological weakness. However, the understanding of the theoretical frame of FN was corroborated by the semi-structured interviews that contained several questions about fundamental concepts of FN, thus aiding in understanding. Further, the FN theories reported here, seem to be in agreement with how FN is defined by statements produced by some FN associations [23, 55]. Concerning our research objectives relating to clinical applications of FN, the information was straightforward to find because the textbook is well structured with



specific chapters dedicated to those topics of interest to this work. Still, it is possible that some information may have been missed or misinterpreted.

ii) **Scientific literature**

The usual strategy of searching for relevant articles by key words could not be used as it resulted in only one relevant article. The reason for this is that the term “functional neurology” is not usually used in such publications, maybe because FN covers many fields of clinical applications. Therefore, relevant keywords could not be predicted.

Instead, we attempted a search by author, including at first all authors that appeared to publish in this area. However, this produced many irrelevant authors with the same surname and initials.

Therefore, we stopped this strategy after the search for FR Carrick, RW Beck, G Leisman and R Melillo in the three selected databases. These four were selected because they appeared to be central to the FN movement. Thereafter, on the advice of a specialist librarian, we wrote directly to these four authors and authors known to have published with them, asking them for their lists of publications. In this way, five publication lists were obtained which resulted in no additional peer-reviewed articles being found. One of these authors recommended a search of the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*. Three additional articles were found in this journal. Finally, our citation search did not result in any additional publications. The obstacles encountered in searching the literature made it difficult to appreciate if all relevant peer-reviewed articles were captured. However, all the acquired literature had the hallmarks of FN, as we had interpreted it from the other sources, so it is our impression that we managed to catch the essence of FN.

The selection of articles for this review was made independently by the first author and an experienced researcher in the team. There were no disagreements between them. Further, the search for relevant information was also blinded with total agreement between the two.

iii) **Websites**

The first author read the websites and collected the relevant information. These were read twice and blinded to previous findings. Subsequent readings would sometimes result in more information being included but no obvious misunderstandings appeared in the later readings.

iv) **Interviews**

Each interview was conducted by the first author and another PhD student. Each tabulated

transcription was done independently by these two people, with the option to listen again to the taped interview. This was necessary only once to clarify the content of the reply of one of the four informants to one of the 24 questions. No other differences between the content of these transcriptions were found between the interviewers.

Synthesis of findings

According to our review, FN has a well described rationale that, if correct, has the potential of improving the lives for many people with a wide variety of conditions which are most often chronic and difficult to manage. The diagnosis of the neurological lesions in FN, i.e. the “physiological lesions”, certainly requires a solid background in central neurology. For chiropractors who embrace this approach, clinical practice would surely be both interesting and challenging.

Further, the practice of FN demands an understanding of how to test the various potential lesions. The interpretation of these tests seems to be very specific to FN, requiring them to be done bilaterally, attempting to detect asymmetries which would indicate lesions, also at a “subclinical” stage. In addition, the patient examination appears time consuming given the numerous tests that are performed, even when there is no obvious indication for them to be performed. Since these tests are used not only to detect lesions but also to monitor progress, the whole treatment strategy seems to be based on these tests; they have great importance, perhaps more than the symptoms. For these reasons, it would be relevant for FN users to assure that all their diagnostic tools are reliable and valid.

Since the recommended treatments do not appear to be noxious, even prolonged treatments are unlikely to cause any direct physical harm. Notwithstanding the approach being low risk, there are two other important aspects which need consideration. Firstly, the choice of one type of therapy may keep patients away from a possibly more suitable treatment; hence the need for comparative studies to determine relative efficacy. Secondly, frequent treatments during a long period of time are costly, potentially both to individuals and society, hence the need to show that they provide better results than less costly alternatives.

We noticed that the list of conditions amenable to improvement with FN is large and the conditions vary in type. However, only few of these have been described in the scientific literature and there seems to be a lack of studies on the effectiveness of the treatment. In relation to treatment effect, it may be difficult to conduct randomized controlled clinical trials on a treatment that concentrates on the



underlying lesion(s) rather than on groups of patients with similar symptoms, because it might be difficult to find enough patients with sufficiently similar lesions to satisfy the methodological requirements for such studies. Obviously, case reports are not sufficient to “prove” the benefit of a treatment, unless the condition is truly irreversible and the observations absolutely objective and irrefutable, as many factors other than the treatment can make a patient feel or appear improved.

At early follow-up, the clinical outcomes in FN are generally reported as complete or partial, without a specific pattern related to the type of condition and/or the severity of the underlying neurological abnormalities. However, we could not judge the long-term clinical outcomes or prognosis for various conditions or in relation to the diagnosed neurological status from a lack of information in our sources. Such outcomes require documentation, to ensure that early improvements endure well past the initial placebo (honeymoon) effect.

Our final impression of FN is that it can be described as a complex alternative to the old variant of the chiropractic subluxation model [56], in which the chiropractor does not consider symptoms, but instead claims to treat the underlying “cause”. Furthermore, when this “cause” has been removed, symptoms will diminish or disappear. According to this traditional chiropractic concept, the “cause” is the vertebral subluxation.

Likewise with FN, the chiropractor does not deal directly with the presenting complaint, but is claiming to treat the underlying “cause”. The main differences are: i) that the “cause” is not as “simple” as the vertebral subluxation but one or more complex dysfunction(s) of the nervous system (often located in the brain), and ii) that the treatment is not limited to the spine and can be quite complex. In sum, the old variant of the chiropractic subluxation concept is spine-centered whereas FN embraces the whole nervous system, with an emphasis on the brain.

Verification of the scientific rationale of the theories of FN, evaluation of the validity of its treatment procedures, and consideration of the effectiveness of its treatments were beyond the remit of this scoping review. However, given that FN has been subject to lively criticism [10, 14–16, 20, 21] and the apparent paucity of scientific documentation within the domains we searched, it would be appropriate to scrutinize these aspects in future studies. This requirement would be the same for any therapeutic approach that is not an accepted part of mainstream medicine.

The neurological concepts presented by functional neurologists are varied and difficult to verify without

having access to experts within many fields, willing to submerge themselves in this topic. A study of the plausibility of the concepts used in FN therefore would appear to be very difficult and time-consuming. Nevertheless, such studies may be justified but only if the treatment approach was tested and found to be valid.

A first step towards a validation of FN would therefore be to study whether one or several of the therapeutic tools suggested by the functional neurologists actually has an objective effect on the nervous system. If so, it would also be needed to investigate if this effect is clinically relevant and sustainable. For example, one central argument in FN is that joint manipulation has a powerful effect on the brain [9, 39, 57]. As some research has been conducted in this area [58–61], a review of the literature seems timely.

Another necessary, perhaps more simple, approach would be to test the validity of the clinical tests. Obviously, the diagnostic procedure has to be reproducible for the diagnosis to be valid. In turn, it is crucial to ensure that the treatment effect (if there is one) can be attributed to the purported mechanisms.

Conclusion

The FN concept that reversible lesions in well-defined areas of the nervous system, especially of the brain, can be an identifiable cause of a multitude of disorders, is difficult for clinicians untrained in FN to verify. Nevertheless, the potential ability to change the quality of life for people suffering from poorly understood and/or chronic disorders makes this concept attractive for both clinicians and patients.

However, there is a need for more transparent documentation on the validity of the various steps normally considered important in evidence-based practice. In other words, the scientific community is waiting with interest to learn more about: i) the plausibility of the rationale of the various more unusual concepts of FN, ii) the reliability of its clinical tests and neurological diagnoses, and iii) the effect of treatment, particularly in relation to spinal manipulation, whether applied to musculoskeletal complaints or not.

Additional files

- Additional file 1: Appendices 1** Search strategy for scientific literature.
- 2.** Questions at a semi-structured interview on the use of Functional Neurology. (ZIP 30 kb)
- Additional file 2: Appendices 3a** Description of 11 peer-reviewed articles on Functional Neurology included in a scoping review. **3b.** Clinical information from websites of chiropractors using Functional Neurology. **3c.** Clinical information on the use of Functional Neurology (FN) from semi-structured interviews of chiropractors proficient in its use [62–66]. (ZIP 78 kb)
- Additional file 3: Appendix 4.** Data analysis and synthesis. (DOCX 109 kb)



Abbreviations

ADD: Attention deficit disorder; ADHD: Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder; CIS: Central integrative state; DACNB: Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Neurology Board; FN: Functional neurology; OCD: Obsessive compulsive disorder; PMRF: Pontomedullary reticular formation

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Availability of data and materials

The datasets used or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Authors' contributions

ALM and CLY performed the scoping review and interpreted the findings. ALM wrote the first draft. CLY, AM and SE provided comments for the subsequent drafts. All the authors revised and approved the final manuscript.

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Ethics approval and consent to participate

A written consent was obtained from each chiropractor who participated to the semi-structured interview to record it and to use its content as search material.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Appendix 1: Search strategy for the scientific literature.

A preliminary search was done using the following search terms: « functional neurology », « chiropractic neurology » and « functional neurology AND chiropractic » in PubMed, PsycINFO and SPORTDiscus. We used no restrictions for date of publication. The search was restricted to English or French languages. However, we realized that scientific literature in this field could not be found in this way. Indeed, only one publication was found using the search terms « chiropractic neurology » [43].

We therefore changed our strategy, instead searching for authors known to publish within FN, i.e. initially FR Carrick and RW Beck, because they appear to be two of the main authors in FN. FR Carrick is considered as the founder of FN, and RW Beck is the author of, to our knowledge, the only FN textbook which deals with the topic in a context of manual therapy. Two frequent co-authors of FR Carrick, also known for their works in a specific branch of FN, i.e. FN applied to neurodevelopmental disorders, were then targeted in further searches, also by name of author (G Leisman and R Melillo). This search was completed in June 2016 and updated in November 2016. Although we found some relevant publications, the number of publications from authors with the same name who were not one of these four appeared often as other authors may be included in the databases in a same or similar manner.

As we had planned to extend our search to the co-authors of the publications we had found, a librarian from the University of Southern Denmark was consulted in order to 1) confirm that no additional publications could be found through search by keywords, and 2) attempt to resolve the problem in relation to the search by authors. The librarian confirmed that the results from the search by keywords was non-productive, even when trying to go further with additional MeSH terms. Concerning the search by authors, the librarian advised us instead to contact the authors directly asking them for their updated publication list to avoid the problem in relation to the indexation of the authors.

Therefore, we attempted to contact the four first authors and their twenty-four co-authors (who were identified at the later step of full text screening) by email. We also attempted to contact the two authors of the article found by keywords, i.e. J Bova and A Sergent. For six of these 30 authors, we did not find any contact information (professional email, professional websites, ResearchGate contact, or LinkedIn contact) but the other twenty-two could be contacted. Seven authors replied to our email but only five of them forwarded an updated list of publications as requested or indicated where to find their publications. Furthermore, one of them recommended us to search in the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*, affiliated to the *International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation*.

The search for authors had the advantage that it actually provided us with a series of articles, the reference lists of which were also scrutinized for suitable publications.



Appendix 2: Questions at a semi-structured interview on the use of Functional Neurology.

Which are your indications for a Functional Neurology (FN) approach?

Which are the indications for which you have the best treatment results?

What is your diagnostic procedure in FN for these patients?

Do you have one general FN standard diagnostic procedure used in all your patients? If not, do you have different diagnostic routines for different types of conditions?

More generally, what are the FN diagnostic tests that you most often use?

What is a FN treatment and what are your goals when using FN?

What are the FN therapeutic modalities that you usually or most often use?

Could you give us an idea of how a FN treatment plan is conducted?

Do the results usually occur quickly and are they long-lasting?

Within FN, manipulation seems to be provided following rules of side and force, are they rules that you follow?

What is the effect of manipulation that you want to achieve, is it segmental and/or supra-segmental?



Appendix 3a: Description of 11 peer-reviewed articles on Functional Neurology included in a scoping review

1st author Year Design	Conditions or symptoms	Diagnostic procedures	Therapeutic modalities	Targeted structures	Treatment plan	Reported clinical outcomes
Carrick 1997 Controlled trial	NA (because experiment on asymptomatic persons)	Blind spot measurement	Upper cervical SMT	One cortical hemisphere	NA	NA
Pedro 2005 Case report	Landau-Kleffner syndrome	-Physical and neurological exams (ND) -Video electro- nystagmography -Ocular-motor function -Metabolic test(s) (ND)	-Manipulation -OPK, visual, vestibular, olfactory, auditory, and somatosensory stimulation -Interactive metronome -Nutritional therapy (ND)	Left cortical hemisphere Right cerebellum	4.5 hours per week, during 12 weeks	Improvement of language, auditory and motor skills after 12 weeks of treatment
Beck 2009 Case report	Complex regional pain syndrome type I	-Vital signs -Auscultation of heart, lungs and abdomen -Ophthalmoscopic and otoscopic exams -Sensory examination -Various reflexes -Cranial nerves -Eye movements -Search for dermographia -Ranges of motion -Palpation	-Mobilizations and manipulations of the lower extremities -SMT -Rehabilitation strategies -Nutrition therapy -Breathing exercises	Unspecified	1 to 2 appointment(s) per week for 8 weeks plus 1 appointment every 2 weeks during 1 month	Full functional recovery after 3 weeks of treatment Persistence of brief episodes of pain at 1 year



Daubeny 2010 Randomized controlled trial	NA (because experiment on asymptomatic persons)	Blind spot measurement	Manipulative therapy of the upper extremities	One cortical hemisphere	NA	NA
Bova 2013 Case report	Cervical dystonia (spasmodic torticollis)	-Observation -Blind spot measurement -Colored lenses -Vibration therapy -Eye movements -Functional Romberg's test	-SMT of the cervical spine -Eye exercises -OPK tape reflex therapy -Vibration therapy -Blue-lensed- glasses	Left cortical hemisphere (mainly frontal lobe) and left basal ganglia Right cerebellum and right vestibular system	Unspecified	Functional improvement and decrease of spasmodic torticollis
Kuhn 2013 Case report	Migraines Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder Obsessive compulsive disorder Tourette syndrome	-Observation -Dermatomes, myotomes, reflexes (upper and lower extremities) -Cranial nerves, including light reflex -Various cerebellar tests -Eye movements -Finger dexterity -IM -TOVA test -Cornners' Parent Rating Scale -Orthopedic exams (ND) -Palpation	-SMT of the cervical, lumbar and pelvic regions -Eye exercises along with coordinated activities (ND) -IM	Right cortical hemisphere and right basal ganglia Left cerebellum and left pons	42 visits over 19 weeks	Migraines were gone Tics also, except in extreme situations of stress or emotion Improvement in learning and behavioral capacities
Hirsh 2013 Case report	Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder Primary nocturnal enuresis	-Observation -Balance assessment -Blood pressure -Heart rate -Myotomes -Rapid alternative	-SMT -Blue-lensed- glasses -OPK stimulation -Vibration therapy -Balance exercises	Right cerebral hemisphere Left cerebellum	36 visits over a period of 18 weeks and daily home exercises	At 18 weeks: Improvement of behavior, confidence, and posture



	Musculoskeletal pain (cervical, back and ankles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> movements -Finger to nose test -Primitive reflexes -TOVA test -Blind spot mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Vestibular stimulation -Timing exercises (including IM) -Home exercises: inhibitory of primitive reflexes, muscles strengthening, and balance exercises. -Dietary changes 			<p>No more difficulty in daytime urinary control</p> <p>3 months after cessation of care: Occasional bed wetting and improvements in various activities of daily living (e.g. getting ready for school)</p>
Esposito 2013 Case report	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury (including: balance issues, dizziness, headaches with scintillating stocoma, anxiety, depression, cognitive impairments, and debilitating physical complaints)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Observation -Vital signs -Ophthalmoscopic exam -Pupil light reflex -Balance assessment -Cranial nerves -Eye movements -Sensory examination -Reflexes -Finger to nose/Heel to shin tests -Red-blue-lensed-glasses -Dual mental tasking -Cognitive tasks -Finger to thumb tapping test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Manipulative therapy of cervical spine and of upper limb -Eye movements -Gyroscope -Red-blue lenses -Passive complex movements of the right upper and lower extremities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cortices Vestibule Right lower brainstem Left upper brainstem Superior colliculi 	10 weeks of treatment (without more details)	<p>Improvement of balance, cognitive abilities, mood, and anxiety</p> <p>Decrease of the number and of the severity of physical complaints</p>
Bova 2014 Case report	Parkinson's disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Observation -Eye movements -Colored lenses -Ranges of motion -Finger-to-nose test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SMT of thoracic spine -Vibration therapy -Blue-lensed-glasses -Mirror imaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frontal lobe Basal ganglia Mesencephalon 	<p>2 visits per week for 10 months</p> <p>The patient pursues this frequency of care</p>	<p>Improved function, posture, tremor and well-being at 2 months</p>



			-Cross crawl exercises		during at least 10 months	These results are stable at 10 month of follow-up. A relapse was observed when the frequency of visits was decreased to 1 visit per week.
Bova 2014 Case report	Idiopathic hemiparesthesia	-Sensory examination -Myotomes -Reflexes -Cranial nerves -Vestibulo-cerebellar tests -Eye movements -Palpation -Ranges of motion	-SMT -Eye exercises -Vibration therapy -Cold laser therapy	Left parietal lobe Left vestibule (posterior semicircular canal)	3 treatment sessions in 2 weeks	Symptom free after 2 sessions of treatment
Traster 2014 Case report	Symptoms related to traumatic brain injury (loss of vibration sense in both legs, dysesthesia of plantar surfaces of the foot, balance and gait issues)	-Observation -Auscultation of heart and lungs - "Respiratory excursion" -Ophthalmoscopic exam -Cranial nerves -Eye movements -Sensory examination -Myotomes -Reflexes -Plantar reflex -Romberg test -Finger-to-nose/Heel to shin tests -Rapid alternative movements -Finger tapping test	-Manipulative therapy -Earth-vertical axis rotations -Eye exercises, including OPK stimulations -Passive complex movements of the right upper and lower extremities -Breathing exercises	Left cortical hemisphere and left brainstem (including the left superior colliculus) Overall vestibule	Approximately 2 to 3 times a week for 3 months	Recovery of vibration sense in legs and free of foot dysesthesia Balance and gait improvement



		-Dual mental tasking -Palpation				
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NA: Not applicable

SMT: Spinal manipulative therapy

ND: Not detailed in the article

OPK: Optokinetic

IM: Interactive metronome

TOVA: Test of variables of attention



Appendix 3b: Clinical information from websites of chiropractors using Functional Neurology

Reference number (in the order in which the websites were scrutinized)	[62]	[63]	[64]	[65]	[66]
Professional profile of the leading practitioner	Chiropractor DACBN Practices in the US Uses also “functional medicine”	Chiropractor, DACNB, FACFN Practices in the US Completed courses in clinical nutrition Works with a nutritional therapist in his office	Chiropractor DACBN Certified in FNOR Practices in the US Speaker in the Carrick Institute Works with another chiropractor who is specialized in “functional medicine”	Chiropractor DACBN, FACFN, FABBIR Formed in the FNOR approach Practices in the US Speaker in the Carrick Institute Completed courses in “functional medicine”	Chiropractor DACBN, FACFN Practices in the US Speaker in the Carrick Institute Gives lectures on “functional medicine” and nutritional approaches
Mentioned indications for a functional neurology approach	Parkinson / Alzheimer’s diseases Dementia Multiple sclerosis Seizure disorders Cerebral palsy Cerebellar ataxia Neurodevelopmental disorders, including dyslexia, autism, ADD, ADHD PTSD Tourette syndrome OCD Eating disorders Anxiety	Early Alzheimer’s / Parkinson’s symptoms Dystonia Tremor disorders Fibromyalgia Restless legs Neurodevelopmental disorders, including ADD, ADHD, dyslexia and autism Headaches / Migraines Neck pain / Low back pain / Sciatica (e.g. bulging, herniated discs) Spinal stenosis	Early Alzheimer’s symptoms Dystonia Tremor disorders Fibromyalgia Restless legs Headaches / Migraines Neck pain / Low back pain / Sciatica (e.g. bulging, herniated discs) Spinal stenosis Pain in upper and lower extremities Carpal tunnel syndrome Traumatic brain injury	Parkinson’s disease Multiple sclerosis Dystonia Neurodevelopmental disorders, including ADD, ADHD and learning disabilities Anxiety / Panic disorders Depression PTSD Headaches / Migraines Neck pain / Low back pain/Sciatica / Spinal stenosis	Parkinson / Alzheimer’s diseases Multiple sclerosis Dystonia Tremors disorders Seizures Neurodevelopmental disorders, including dyslexia, autism, ADD / ADHD Anxiety / Panic disorders Depression PTSD Tourette syndrome OCD



	<p>Headaches / Migraines Cerebral vascular accident</p> <p>Traumatic brain injury</p> <p>Vertigo Sleeping difficulties Stress</p> <p>Incomplete spinal cord injury Limb amputation</p> <p>Physical, academic, cognitive and artistic performances</p>	<p>Pain in upper and lower extremities Carpal tunnel syndrome</p> <p>Traumatic brain injury</p> <p>Balance disorders Vertigo / dizziness Numbness Insomnia</p>	<p>Balance disorders Vertigo / dizziness Numbness Insomnia</p> <p>Physical performances</p> <p>Low immunity</p>	<p>Pain in upper and lower extremities Carpal tunnel syndrome Temporomandibular joint disorders</p> <p>Traumatic brain injury</p> <p>Post stroke symptoms</p> <p>Balance disorders Vertigo / dizziness Brain fog Bed wetting</p> <p>Spinal cord injury</p> <p>Physical performances Declining brain function related to aging</p> <p>Lyme disease Hashimoto's disease Andropause Biotoxin illness Food allergies or sensitivities Leaky gut syndrome Disembarkement syndrome</p>	<p>Headaches / Migraines Chronic Pain Peripheral neuropathies</p> <p>Post-stroke symptoms</p> <p>Traumatic brain injury</p> <p>Balance disorders Vertigo/dizziness Fatigue Sleeping difficulties</p> <p>Physical, cognitive and creative faculties Declining brain function related to aging</p> <p>Lyme disease</p>
<p>Examination procedures mentioned</p>	<p>Detailed health history</p> <p>Postural analysis</p> <p>Cognitive tests</p>	<p>Not described</p>	<p>Health history</p> <p>Postural and gait analysis</p> <p>Cognitive tests</p>	<p>Detailed health history</p> <p>Postural and gait analysis</p> <p>Cognitive tests</p>	<p>Detailed health history</p> <p>Postural and gait analysis</p>



	<p>Autonomic functions</p> <p>Ophthalmoscopic examination</p> <p>Myotomes, dermatomes and reflexes</p> <p>Examination of cranial nerves (at least some of them)</p> <p>Balance assessment, including computerized dynamic posturography</p> <p>Video nystagmography</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Nutritional and metabolic screening</p> <p>Interactive metronome</p> <p>Quantitative electroencephalography</p>		<p>Myotomes and reflexes</p> <p>Cerebellar tests</p> <p>Balance assessment</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Laboratory testing</p> <p>Complementary imaging</p> <p>Orthopedic assessment</p>	<p>Vital signs</p> <p>Balance assessment, including computerized dynamic posturography</p> <p>Video nystagmography</p> <p>Eye movements, including saccadometry</p> <p>Coordination</p> <p>Laboratory testing</p> <p>Complementary imaging</p> <p>Motor accuracy</p> <p>Neurological endurance</p>	<p>Examination of cranial nerves (at least some of them)</p> <p>Cerebellar tests</p> <p>Balance assessment, including assisted by computer</p> <p>Video nystagmography</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Laboratory testing</p>
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<p>Treatment modalities used within a Functional Neurology approach</p>	<p><u>Individualised treatment that may include:</u> Musculoskeletal intervention Motor exercises</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Vestibular and balance training</p> <p>Visual, auditory and olfactory stimulation Computer based brain games</p> <p>Interactive Metronome</p> <p>Neurofeedback associated or not with transcranial magnetic stimulation</p> <p>Metabolic and nutritional therapy</p> <p>Oxygen therapy</p>	<p><u>Individualised treatment that may include:</u> Traditional chiropractic instruments and/or adjustments</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Visual, auditory and olfactory stimulation</p> <p>Heat Changes of diet Supplements Lifestyle advice</p>	<p><u>Individualised treatment that may include:</u> Chiropractic adjustment</p> <p>Soft tissues therapies FNOR system, including rehab exercises</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Vestibular rehabilitation Repositioning maneuvers</p> <p>Heat and ice application</p> <p>Home exercises</p> <p>Nutritional counseling Lifestyle advice</p>	<p><u>Individualised treatment that may include:</u> Light force chiropractic adjustments</p> <p>Soft tissues therapies, including nerve flossing exercises and ART technique Rehab exercises</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Balance rehabilitation Vestibular rehabilitation, including an off-axis rotation device</p> <p>Visual and auditory stimulation</p> <p>Dynavision D2</p> <p>Repetitive peripheral somatosensory stimulation</p> <p>Accelerated recovery performance wave</p> <p>Primitive reflex remediation</p> <p>Home therapies</p> <p>Changes of diet</p>	<p><u>Individualised treatment that may include:</u> Chiropractic manipulation</p> <p>Rehab exercises</p> <p>Eye movements</p> <p>Balance exercises Vestibular exercises</p> <p>Visual, auditory and vibration stimulation</p> <p>Home exercises</p> <p>Changes of diet Supplements</p>
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				Supplements	
Mentioned treatment plans in relation to FN approach	<p>Individualised</p> <p>Usually multiple sessions per day (with an average of 3 sessions of 1.5 hours each per day), for one or more weeks (e.g. during 5 to 15 days for enhancing academic performances)</p> <p>No information on any long-term strategies</p>	Not described	Not described	<p>Individualised</p> <p>Usually 2 times per week for 6 weeks plus additional treatments as needed</p> <p>For complex conditions, the therapy may be more intensive: 3 to 5 times per day for up to 5 consecutive days</p> <p>No information on any long-term strategies</p>	<p>Individualised</p> <p>Usually 1 to 3 times per week for a few weeks and more frequently for challenging conditions (e.g. in severe brain trauma) with several sessions per day over one or two weeks.</p> <p>Frequency of appointments decreases during a period of 2 to 4 months.</p>



					No information on any long-term strategies
Expected clinical outcomes	<p>Relief / improvement (e.g. Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, ADHD) or resolution (e.g. post-concussion) of symptoms or conditions are expected.</p> <p>Significant results in few days or weeks are expected.</p> <p>The durability of the clinical outcomes is not mentioned.</p>	<p>Relief of symptoms or conditions is the main treatment objective</p> <p>NB: FN treatment is described as not trying to cure anything.</p> <p>Amazing results for symptoms and conditions that other methods fail to manage might be expected.</p> <p>The durability of the clinical outcomes is not mentioned.</p>	<p>Significant improvement of symptoms or of conditions are expected.</p> <p>Resolution of migraines, of vertigo, of chronic pain, and of symptoms related to brain injury could be expected.</p> <p>The durability of the clinical outcomes is not mentioned.</p>	<p>Rapid decrease in pain and improvement in function are expected after the initial care.</p> <p>Also, full recovery could be expected.</p> <p>The durability of the clinical outcomes is not mentioned.</p>	<p>Profound improvement and even resolution of the symptoms, even for advanced conditions are expected.</p> <p>NB: This statement is nuanced by specifying that FN does not cure or change degenerative conditions.</p> <p>NB: At times, no results are observed.</p> <p>The durability of the clinical outcomes is not mentioned.</p> <p>NB: Often, home exercises are maintained beyond the supervised treatment in order to stabilize the results.</p>

DACNB: Diplomates of the American Chiropractic Neurology Board

US: United States

FACFN: Fellow of the American College of Functional Neurology

FNOR: Functional Neuro-Orthopedic Rehabilitation (for more information please see <http://fnor.net>)

FABBIR: Fellow of the American Board of Brain Injury and Rehabilitation

ADD: Attention deficit disorder

ADHD: Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder

PTSD: Post traumatic syndrome disorder

OCD: Obsessive compulsive disorder

Dynavision D2 (for more information please see <http://www.dynavisioninternational.com>)

Accelerated recovery performance wave (for more information please see <http://www.arpwave.com>)



Appendix 3c: Clinical information on the use of Functional Neurology (FN) from semi-structured interviews of chiropractors proficient in its use

Informant (in the order in which the informants were interviewed)	1	2	3	4
Professional profile of the informant	Informant is certified in FN (DACNB) and practices FN since more than 15 years -Continues taking courses in FN -Uses FN for 80% of his patients	Informant is certified in FN (DACNB) and practices FN since more than 20 years -Continues taking courses in FN -Uses FN for 100% of his patients	Informant is not certified in FN and, practices FN since more than 5 years -Continues taking courses in FN -Uses FN for 20 - 30% of his patients	Informant is certified in FN (DACNB) and, practices FN since more than 10 years -Continues taking courses in FN -Uses FN for 100% of his patients
Typical indications for a FN approach	All conditions can potentially be analyzed through FN. Examples of symptoms and conditions treated: -Multiple sclerosis -Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis -Post-concussion symptoms -Musculoskeletal disorders (e.g. sciatica, sacroiliac joint pain) -Vertigo -Tinnitus Examples of other indications managed by other functional neurologists: -Post-traumatic stress disorders -Medullary lesions	All conditions can potentially be analyzed through FN. Symptoms and conditions most often treated: -Neurodevelopmental disorders, including ADD/ADHD and « dys » disorders (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia) -Migraines, headaches -Post-concussion symptoms -Vertigo, balance disorders -Neuralgia (e.g. sciatica, Arnold neuralgia, trigeminal neuralgia) Other conditions also seen: -Neurodegenerative disorders (e.g. Parkinson's disease) -Dystonia -Musculoskeletal conditions (e.g. tendinopathies, low back pain)	Symptoms and conditions most often treated: -Neuro-musculoskeletal conditions (recurrent or chronic) -Migraines, headaches -Vertigo, balance disorders Other conditions also seen: -Multiple sclerosis -Post-stroke symptoms -Neurodevelopmental disorders such as ADD/ADHD, and dyslexia	All conditions can potentially be analyzed through FN. Symptoms and conditions most often treated: -Parkinson's syndromes -Cervical dystonia -Post-stroke symptoms -Cerebral palsy -Post-traumatic stress disorders -Post-concussion symptoms Other conditions also seen: -Neurodevelopmental disorders (ADD/ADHD and « dys » disorders) -Musculoskeletal disorders, especially the chronic ones (e.g. neck and low back pains, sciatica, headaches)
Typical examination procedures for FN diagnosis	The informant has a routine diagnosis which constitutes a	Informant has no routine for patient examination which is	Diagnostic procedures:	Diagnosis procedures:



	<p>basis on which some tests are added depending on the symptoms of the patient</p> <p>Diagnosis procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gait analysis (eyes open, eyes closed) -Posture analysis -Muscle testing of the proximal muscles and of the deep muscles of the neck -Reflexes, including osteotendinous reflexes -Brainstem evaluation, especially through the assessment of vision, vestibulo-ocular reflex and balance -Balance analysis, including Fukuda test, force platform (eyes open, eyes closed, feet apart, feet together) -Chiropractic palpation <p>Other procedures regularly used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Muscle testing of the distal muscles -Blind spot mapping 	<p>rather individualized but uses a basis on which some other tests may be added</p> <p>Tests more often used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Observation (e.g. looking for movement disorders, gait analysis, how the patient speaks) -Blood pressure -Oximetry -Sensory examination, including pinwheel test and vibration sense -Reflexes, particularly osteotendinous reflexes -Examination of cranial nerves -Vestibulo-cerebellar tests (e.g. Romberg, Fukuda, finger-to-nose/nose-to-finger, heel-to-knee, eyes movements) -Eyes movements (pursuits, saccades, fixation and optokinetic movements), in part for assessing the function of the cerebral cortex -Blind spot mapping -Assessment of the function of the basal ganglia (e.g. finger tapping test) <p>Tests less often used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cognitive tests (e.g. Test of variables of attention) -Cardiac auscultation -Cutaneous reflexes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Questionnaire about some functions of different parts of the brain -Questionnaire about other systems than the nervous system (e.g. digestive, adrenal, bloodstream) -Observation (posture and gait analysis, tonus of facial muscles) <p>Informant described the FN examination as individualized to be based on the replies to the questionnaires mentioned above.</p> <p>Tests more often used following the questionnaires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cerebellar tests -Eyes movements (pursuits, saccades) -Vestibulo-ocular tests -Romberg test -Fukuda test combined with a vestibular stimulation -Pupillary reflex <p>Tests previously used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Blind spot mapping -Posture analysis related to « hemisphericity » 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Questionnaires, including one designed to detect an hemisphericity and one about nutrition -Observation (looking for movement disorders, gait analysis, how the patient speaks) -Cognitive tests -Autonomic parameters, including oxygen, blood pressure, cardiac frequency and pupillary size. -Peripheral neurological tests -Examination of cranial nerves -Static and dynamic vestibular tests (e.g. head impulse test) -Cerebellar tests -Eyes movements (including saccades, pursuit and optokinetic movements) -Balance platform -Feedback tests -Somatosensory evoked potentials <p>Assessment of other parameters if necessary, depending on patient's symptoms (e.g. the Test of variables of attention for children and adults who suffer from cognitive disturbances)</p>
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		-Balance platform -Interactive metronome		
Typical treatment modalities used	All the chiropractic tools or techniques can be used within a FN approach. Home exercises, including: -Riding a bike (in order to stimulate the temporal lobes) -Muscles strengthening (mainly, shoulder girdles, pelvic girdles and deep neck muscles) Informant uses other treatment modalities such as ocular exercises for very specific problems.	First, uses chiropractic manipulation(s) and/or chiropractic tools Thereafter, (depending on the case), treatment may consist on: Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation Somatosensory evoked potential, especially to stimulate the brainstem Interactive metronome Vibration therapy Home exercises, including: -Oculomotor exercises -Vestibular exercises -Physical exercises Dietary advices (if needed)	First, uses chiropractic manipulations Thereafter, (depending on the case), treatment may consist on: Sensory stimuli, including stretching, visual, olfactory, and sound stimuli Balance exercises Oculomotor exercises Coordination exercises Exercises for fine motor skills Home exercises Mirror therapy Digestive problems, body inflammation, disorders of blood glucose, etc. are aspects that have to be addressed (if needed) in order to facilitated the treatment by neuro-stimulations.	First, uses chiropractic manipulation and joint mobilization Thereafter, (depending on the case), treatment may consist on: Sensory stimuli, including vibration therapy, massage, sound, and light Vestibular rehabilitation, including with the Gyrostim Feedbacks, including neuro and myofeedback Stimulation by sensory substitution Oculomotor exercises Somatosensory evoked potential Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation
Typical treatment plans	Treatment plans are individualized, depending on the severity of the symptoms. Usually, the informant plans 2-3 treatment sessions for	Treatment plans are individualized, depending on the « fatigability » of the patient's nervous system and on his/her implication in the treatment.	Treatment plans are individualized, depending on the symptoms of the patient and on his/her implication in home exercises.	Treatment plans are individualized, depending to the symptoms on the patient and on the therapeutic objectives.



	<p>observing if good results appear and then continue or not.</p> <p>Severe conditions can need daily treatment or 2-3 sessions per week, during 2-3 weeks. However, the informant does almost not use this kind of intensive treatment plan due to the cost that would represent for the patients and the material that is needed. If these types of care are needed, the informant tries to work with other practitioners who will maintain the results (e.g. physiotherapist).</p>	<p>For example, an adolescent with moderate « dys » symptoms may be seen 1-2 times per week during a few weeks, then visits are progressively spaced. In addition, patients are supposed to do 10 min of therapeutic exercises per day at home.</p> <p>A child also suffering from « dys » disorders but with more complex test results during the FN examination will be seen more frequently.</p>	<p>Usually, symptoms and conditions for which the use of FN is needed require more frequent treatment sessions than with a « classic » chiropractic approach.</p> <p>Home exercises have to be repeated several times per day (7-9) for short periods of 3-4 minutes.</p>	<p>Usually, patients are treated 3-4 times per day during 2-3 weeks or 2 times per week during 3-4 months. Each treatment session lasts about 20 minutes.</p> <p>Patients who suffer from Parkinson's disease, are usually treated during 3 consecutive days, 3-4 times per year.</p>
<p>Expected outcomes following a FN approach</p>	<p>Varies, depending on patients' symptoms and condition</p> <p>For example, the informer has good results on vertigo and less consistently good results for tinnitus.</p> <p>Generally, the results can be observed quickly, in 2-3 treatment sessions.</p> <p>Sometimes, in few seconds, the awakening of neural circuits might be observed.</p> <p>For most of the conditions, the results with a FN approach are</p>	<p>Varies, depending on patients' symptoms and condition</p> <p>For most conditions treated by this chiropractor (e.g. headaches, vertigo, ADHD), good results are expected and they can be observed quickly, in 2-3 weeks of treatment.</p> <p>Generally, some positive results are expected within 2-3 weeks. It takes longer to stabilize the condition.</p> <p>The results take longer to occur for patients with a high degree of cellular « fatigability » and</p>	<p>Varies, depending on patients' symptoms and condition</p> <p>Usually, for headaches, vertigo and balance disorders (qualified as "functional symptoms" by the informant), good and quick results (in 3 or 4 treatments) are expected.</p> <p>The results take longer to arrive, are more progressive and less impressive for irreversible conditions such as Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease.</p>	<p>The best results are noted for children in general (e.g. ADD, cerebral palsy) and, for patients suffering from chronic musculoskeletal disorders or from post-stroke symptoms.</p> <p>For most conditions treated by this chiropractor, the results can be observed quickly. For example, a child who suffers from cerebral palsy can be improved after 3 days of treatment.</p> <p>Sometimes the results are immediate. However, because of the severity of the</p>



	<p>not more important or quickly observed than with other chiropractic approaches. However, for complex cases, such as multiple sclerosis or post-concussion symptoms, FN may provide better and quicker results.</p> <p>The stability of the results is comparable to other therapeutic approaches. This depends on the lifestyle of the patient.</p>	<p>for neurodegenerative diseases. Results are less constant for neurodegenerative diseases and for movement disorders.</p> <p>Treatment plan, treatment results and stability are influenced by the assiduity of the patient.</p> <p>Results are described as longer lasting and “deeper” than with « classic » chiropractic.</p>	<p>The results depend also on the assiduity of the patient with his/her home exercises and/or of his/her assiduity to return for maintenance care.</p> <p>Stability of the results depends on the same criteria as those influencing the expected outcomes. The more the problem is chronic and/or “pathologic” vs. “functional”, the more chiropractic treatments can be needed to maintain the results.</p>	<p>encountered conditions, « miracles » are not expected.</p> <p>Therapeutic objectives are defined with the patient. Generally, they aim for more autonomy.</p> <p>Some patients do not respond to a FN treatment or only obtain minor improvement.</p> <p>Usually, the results are transitory in adults and aging patients and lasting in children, even when they suffer from a severe condition. Also, it depends on the pathology and on the plasticity of the individual’s nervous system.</p>
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DACNB: Diplomates of the American Chiropractic Neurology Board

ADD/ADHD: Attention deficit disorders / attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders



Appendix 4: Data analysis and synthesis.

Objective 1 (Theories which constitute the basis of Functional Neurology):

As shown in **Table 1**, the **theories** on which Functional Neurology (FN) are based were exclusively extracted from the book [29] and not from our other sources. The reasons are that the scientific articles and websites were not expected to provide substantial information about this topic or only on scattered theoretical point(s), and that the interviews were designed mainly in order to understand the clinical applications of FN. On this basis, we attempted to provide a brief description of the fundamental concepts of FN, in the context of manual therapies.

Objective 2 (Indications of FN):

The **indications** of FN were listed from our four sources in **Table 2**, which was constructed as follows: After identifying groups and subgroups of indications, specific examples were collected from our four sources and were listed to show if each source mentioned them or not. For some indications, examples were not needed (e.g. symptoms related to traumatic brain injuries), in such cases their mention was identified with a cross. While all the examples mentioned in the book and in the scientific articles were listed, the examples from the websites and from the interviews were listed only when at least two websites or two informants evoked the same indication. This approach was chosen due to the extensiveness of the indications collected through these two sources. However, all the indications mentioned are available in **Appendices 3b and 3c**. Given the research objectives of the controlled trial and of the randomized controlled trial, conducted on healthy subjects with an enlarged blind spot, these two studies did not provide information about indications of FN.

Objective 3 (Diagnostic procedures of FN):

Diagnostic procedures were identified from our sources and were classified according to the structure(s) or the function(s) they are stated to assess. **Table 3** lists specific examples of diagnostic procedures for each. Only the diagnostic procedures that could clearly be identified were taken into account. For example, a procedure such as “assessment of neurological endurance” was not considered because of the impossibility to identify to what it refers. As seen in **Table 2**, for the websites and the interviews, examples were reported when at least two websites or two informants mentioned them. If specific examples for structure or function tests were not provided by at least two sources (for websites, and informants), this was indicated with a cross. All the examination procedures that were identified from these two sources are available in **Appendices 3b and 3c**.

Objective 4 (Therapeutic modalities used in FN):

Given the large number of **therapeutic modalities** that are used in FN and the fact that they are clearly chosen in relation to the area(s) of the nervous system they are stated to stimulate, we have chosen to present them in a separate table (**Table 4**) in the following way: For each source, we searched for treatment modalities that are clearly mentioned in order to stimulate one or several specific parts of the nervous system. Thus, not all the articles, websites and the



interviews were used to collect this information. This strategy allowed us to illustrate how a neurological area may be stimulated rather than having a list of treatment modalities without any context. Furthermore, all the collected therapeutic modalities are listed in **Appendices 3a to 3c**.

Objective 5 (Treatment plans in FN):

Concerning **treatment plans**, information was extracted from three sources, scientific articles, websites and interviews. In fact, at this step we already knew that despite a chapter dedicated to six clinical cases in the textbook, the treatment plans were not detailed. In **Table 5** we separated initial care from maintenance care. Only the articles, the websites, and the interviews, which mentioned the frequency of treatment sessions, were used to collect this information. Treatment plans were searched in general terms and for specific conditions. Given the research objectives of the controlled trial and of the randomized controlled trial, these two articles did not provide information about treatment plans in FN.

Objective 6 (Reported or expected clinical outcomes after a FN approach):

Our last study objective was to describe the **reported or expected clinical outcomes** in response to FN care. The clinical outcomes were collected in **Table 6** and discussed in terms of early outcome/prognosis and long-term outcome/prognosis. Clinical outcomes were searched in our four sources in general terms (websites and interviews) and for specific disorders (textbook, scientific articles, websites and interviews), remembering that effect of treatment can be examined only in randomized controlled trials. As for objectives two and five, the controlled trial and of the randomized controlled trial did not provide information about clinical outcomes related to FN approach.



ANNEXE II: Article 2 _ *Unravelling functional neurology: a critical review of clinical articles on the effect or benefit of the functional neurology approach*



REVIEW

Open Access



Unravelling functional neurology: a critical review of clinical research articles on the effect or benefit of the functional neurology approach

Anne-Laure Meyer^{1,2,3*}  and Charlotte Leboeuf-Yde^{1,2,3}

Abstract

Background: Functional Neurology (FN), mainly practiced by chiropractors, proposes to have an effect or a benefit on varied clinical cases, from debilitating diseases to performance enhancement in asymptomatic people.

Objectives and design: A critical review of publications captured in and from the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics* (FNRE) was performed in order to investigate whether there is evidence on clinical effects or benefits of FN. This review had five research objectives, three relating to the type of literature available through this journal, and two in relation to design and methodological aspects of the included studies.

Method: All issues of the FNRE journal were searched (October 2017), including a handsearch of their lists of other relevant publications. In order to find evidence in relation to the effect or benefit of FN, the search was restricted to prospective clinical research studies with a control group, claiming or appearing to deal with the topic. The review was undertaken by two independent reviewers using two checklists, one relating to study description, and one on quality. Results were reported narratively.

Results: Nine articles were found. The FNRE journal contained 168 authored texts, of which 36 were *research studies* (21%). Four of these were *clinical research studies* on FN effect or benefit (2%). Another five were obtained through the handsearch. The included studies were conducted on adults or children, symptomatic or not, and investigated various interventions consisting of single or multiple stimuli, of varied nature, all primarily said to be provided to stimulate brain areas. Conditions included attention deficit disorders, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, autism-spectrum disorders, cortical visual impairment, traumatic brain injury, and migraine. Balance and the “blind spot” were investigated in healthy subjects. Major design and methodological issues were identified and discussed for all the nine studies; only four were considered as (potentially) appropriate for further scrutiny. However, these were of low methodological quality and, therefore, no robust evidence could be found in relation to the effect or benefit of the tested FN interventions.

Conclusions: This journal contains no acceptable evidence on the effect or benefit of FN in relation to various conditions and purported indications for intervention.

Keywords: Functional neurology, Chiropractic, Critical review, Evidence, Effect, Benefit

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Resume

Introduction: La Neurologie Fonctionnelle (NF), approche thérapeutique principalement pratiquée par des chiropracteurs, permettrait d'obtenir des effets ou bénéfices cliniques dans de nombreux cas, allant de pathologies handicapantes à l'amélioration des performances chez des personnes sans problème de santé.

Design et objectifs: Une revue critique de la littérature des publications obtenues à partir du journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics* (FNRE) a été conduite afin d'étudier s'il existe une évidence scientifique concernant les effets ou bénéfices cliniques de la NF. Cette revue avait cinq objectifs, trois en rapport avec le type de littérature disponible à travers ce journal, et deux en rapport avec les *designs* et aspects méthodologiques des études incluses.

Méthode: L'ensemble des volumes du journal FNRE ont été consultés (octobre 2017), y compris les listes de références des publications faites par les membres de l'association *International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation*. Dans le but d'étudier les faits scientifiques concernant les effets ou bénéfices cliniques de la NF, notre recherche a été limitée à des études cliniques prospectives incluant au moins un groupe contrôle, annonçant ou paraissant traiter du sujet. La revue a été menée par les deux auteurs, de manière indépendante, afin d'extraire les informations descriptives et d'évaluer la qualité méthodologique des articles inclus. Les résultats ont été rapportés de manière narrative.

Résultats: Neuf articles ont pu être inclus. Le journal FNRE contenait 168 textes avec mention d'au moins un auteur, parmi lesquels 36 étaient des études de recherche (21%). Seules quatre étaient des études cliniques portant sur l'effet ou le bénéfice de la NF (2%). Cinq autres études cliniques ont été obtenues via les listes de références mentionnées ci-dessus. Les neuf études incluses avaient été conduites sur des adultes ou des enfants, symptomatiques ou non, et investigaient diverses interventions consistant en des stimuli, uniques ou multiples, de nature variée, tous présentés comme utilisés pour spécifiquement stimuler des régions cérébrales. Les conditions étudiées incluaient des troubles du déficit de l'attention avec ou sans hyperactivité, des troubles du spectre autistique, des cas de déficience visuelle d'origine corticale, de traumatismes crâniens, et de migraines. Des changements d'équilibre et de taille du « blind spot » ont été investigués chez des sujets sains. Des problèmes de *design* et de méthodologie ont été identifiés et discutés pour ces neuf études; seules quatre ont été considérées comme (potentiellement) appropriées pour une évaluation de leur qualité méthodologique. Ces dernières étaient de faible qualité méthodologique et, de ce fait, aucune évidence scientifique solide n'a pu être trouvée en relation avec l'effet ou le bénéfice des modalités thérapeutiques de NF testées dans ces études.

Conclusion: Le journal FNRE ne contient pas d'évidence scientifique pouvant soutenir l'effet ou le bénéfice d'une approche thérapeutique en NF et ce, concernant diverses conditions et indications supposées.

Mots clés: Neurologie Fonctionnelle, Chiropraxie, Revue critique, Evidance scientifique, Effet thérapeutique, Bénéfice clinique

抽象

背景: 主要由脊椎治疗师实施的功能性神经病学(FN)提议对各种临床病例(从衰弱疾病到无症状人群表现增强)产生效果或益处。

目标和设计: 对功能性神经病学,康复和人体工程学(FNRE)期刊中收录的出版物进行评论性审查,以调查是否有FN临床效果或益处的证据。该评价有五个研究目标,其中三个与通过该期刊提供的文献类型有关,另外两个涉及所纳入研究的设计和方法学方面。

方法: 搜索所有FNRE期刊(2017年10月),包括手工搜索其他相关出版物的清单。为了找到与FN的效果或益处相关的证据,该搜索仅限于与对照组进行的前瞻性临床研究,声称或似乎处理该主题。评审由两名独立评审员使用两份清单进行,一份与研究描述相关,另一份与质量相关。叙述性地报道了结果。

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结果: 发现了9篇文章。FNRE杂志包含168篇着作文章,其中36篇是研究报告(21%)。其中四项是关于FN效应或益处的临床研究(2%)。另外五个是通过手工搜索获得的。所纳入的研究是针对成年人或儿童进行的,无论是否有症状,并研究了由单一或多种刺激组成的各种干预措施,这些干预措施具有不同的性质,所有这些主要都是为了刺激大脑区域。症状包括注意力缺陷障碍,注意力缺陷和多动症,自闭症谱系障碍,皮质视觉障碍,创伤性脑损伤和偏头痛。平衡和“盲点”在健康受试者中进行了调查。主要的设计和方法论问题在所有九项研究中都得到确认和讨论;只有四个被认为(可能)适合进一步审查。然而,这些方法的质量很低,因此,没有有力的证据可以发现与测试的FN干预措施的效果或益处有关。

结论: 本期刊没有关于FN对各种症状和干预适应症的影响或益处的可接受证据。

Background

Functional Neurology (FN), a therapeutic approach founded by a chiropractor, FR Carrick, proposes treatment to alleviate many chronic and even incurable conditions [1]. Given the diversity of symptoms and disorders that “functional neurologists” claim to deal with, ranging from musculoskeletal to neurodegenerative, this approach would have the potential to improve the quality of life of many people.

Therefore, FN interests many practitioners [2, 3], including chiropractors, a profession in which this approach may well be spreading. This is mainly achieved through seminars given by private organizations such as the *Carrick Institute*. The offer of FN seminars is sizable and it is necessary to attend many of them before reaching a certain level of proficiency as a “functional neurologist” [4].

FN is based on the assumption that reversible lesions in the nervous system, especially in the brain, are the cause of a multitude of conditions and that specific clusters of deficient neurons (e.g. neurons on one side of the cerebellum) can be positively affected by various stimuli, including but not restricted to manipulative therapy [1, 5].

For example, in a book chapter dedicated to clinical cases, the author describes the FN approach of an attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) patient as well as of a case of low back pain with spinal root compression [6]. In the first case, a FN diagnosis of right cerebral hemisphere and left cerebellum dysfunctions was made. The second case led to a FN diagnosis of right hemisphere dysfunction, meaning that for two such very different types of conditions an almost identical FN diagnosis may be provided. Both cases were treated in the manner of FN with joint manipulations, breathing exercises and nutritional support. The only difference was that, for the case of ADHD, treatment was complemented with sound therapy and spatial rearrangement exercises.

This approach does not appear to be generally accepted in classical neurology, and although many, if not

most, of the diagnostic tools used in FN are also known in classical medicine, the interpretation made by “functional neurologists” is probably not always known or understood outside FN, such as their use of the “blind spot” [7], which has evoked questions and criticism [8–13].

Further, a recent scoping review on the topic of FN [1] found that despite the extensive list of supposed FN indications, only a few of these appear to have been described in the scientific literature, with an apparent lack of studies in relation to treatment effect, i.e. a lack of studies with robust design. However, this scoping review investigated FN in a context of chiropractic manual therapy and it is therefore possible that evidence might exist on FN interventions that do not include an element of manual therapy (which is not systematically used by “functional neurologists”), for which reason this area merits further investigation.

Many chiropractors are using, at least, elements of FN on their patients, but as the chiropractic profession in many countries is legally recognized and hence expected to be evidence-seeking and evidence-accepting, it is important to investigate the level of such evidence regarding FN, including its clinical effect or benefit. Such evidence is required for FN to be regarded as credible. Obviously, this requirement would be the same for any therapeutic approach when, as in this case, it is not an accepted part of mainstream medicine, and in particular if the theories on which they rest are not generally considered to be plausible in the light of present-day state-of-the-art knowledge.

Unfortunately, scientific literature that covers FN topics has already been found by the present authors to be difficult to capture, making a systematic search difficult when searching for indexed literature in scientific databases. One of the most well-known authors within FN previously directed us to the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics* (FNRE) (G Leisman, personal communication). This journal is published by the Nova Science Publishers group [14], not indexed in Medline or Scopus and therefore somewhat



difficult to find. It is affiliated to the *International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation*, an FN organization promoting this approach, including through research activities such as the FNRE journal.

Although this journal states under its “aim and scope” to deal with topics other than FN, a list of neurological disorders is provided with diseases and traumatism of the brain listed first under its “description of the field covered”. Therefore, this appears to be a major source of information on the FN approach. The FNRE journal was previously searched for its scientific contents in relation to FN in a chiropractic context but resulted in only three relevant articles [1]. Nevertheless, relevant information on FN in general might still be found in this journal, as manipulation is only one of the therapeutic tools available to “functional neurologists”.

We therefore decided to perform a critical review of all publications in this journal to investigate the evidence for clinical effect or benefit of FN. Specifically, our research objectives were:

1-To define the proportion of articles that are *research studies* (i.e. not narrative reviews, discussion papers, poster abstracts, abstracts, editorial material, or public relation information) in the FNRE journal.

2-To define how many of those are *clinical research studies* that purported or appeared to deal with effect or benefit of FN.

3-To describe which indications and FN interventions were studied in the *clinical research studies* captured through the FNRE journal.

4-In these studies, to establish whether the design and overall study method were suitable for research into the effect or benefit of FN.

5-To describe the evidence available in relation to the clinical effect or benefit of FN, taking into account some minimal methodological criteria.

Methods

Search strategy for information and screening procedure

All issues of the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics* were obtained in October 2017. At this period, all of its six volumes and twenty-four issues, edited between 2011 and 2016, were searched for *research studies* on FN effect or benefit, based on titles and abstracts, and, when needed, on full texts. No issues were published before 2011 or after 2016, at the time of writing this report (December 2017 to January 2018).

The texts in these issues were blindly screened by the authors, according to predetermined definitions of which articles would be considered acceptable, i.e. considered as *research studies* (defined in the section *Inclusion and exclusion process of articles*). Thereafter, the two authors extracted from all the research articles those articles that

were *clinical research articles* reporting on effect or benefit of FN.

Most issues of the journal FNRE contain a section entitled “*IAFNR News and Events*”, where various types of information about the *International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation* and its members is reported. Within this information, lists of recent publications in peer-reviewed journals authored by members of the *International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation* were available. These reference lists were independently searched by the authors to find additional *clinical research studies* in relation to effect or benefit of FN. Only titles of published or scientific articles accepted for publication were considered in these lists, which mixed published, accepted, and submitted articles, as well as conference papers.

Inclusion and exclusion process of articles

Step 1: In order to define the proportion of articles that were *research studies* in the six volumes and twenty-four issues of the journal FNRE, the total of *texts* was counted twice by ALM on the basis of the table of contents of each issue. We defined as a *text* a written script introduced by a title for which at least one author's name was mentioned. Therefore, *texts* may include written scripts as varied as scientific articles, abstracts, editorials, and letters to editor.

Articles were considered as *research studies* when they had 1) one or several research questions or research objectives and 2) a methods section that explained the process of data collection and data analysis. This means that discussion papers, narrative reviews but also case reports would not be counted as such. We did not include research information presented solely in abstracted form, such as posters and conference proceedings, as they do not contain full information of the study project. At this stage, we did not differentiate experimental studies from clinical studies and we also included studies that dealt with other topics than FN.

Step 2: *Research studies* were included as *clinical research studies* dealing with effect or benefit of FN if 1) the intention to investigate an effect or benefit was obvious, searching throughout the articles for words such as “effect(s)”, “effectiveness”, “improvement(s)”, “improve”, “recover”, “recovery”, or “benefit(s)”, and 2) the intervention that was investigated had the hallmark of FN, as it was described in a previous review [1]. Furthermore, *research studies* were considered as *clinical* when the investigated intervention was clearly known or identified as already used in clinical practice, specifically within FN.

Any intervention that included a stimulus said to be directed to the nervous system could be included, given



that the FN approach had been previously described as consisting of almost any kind of stimulus purported to stimulate the nervous system, especially the brain [1]. This could also be multifaceted, i.e. consisting of various stimuli, being or not complemented by nutritional counseling or supplements.

These studies could report results on symptomatic or asymptomatic subjects and, if subjects were symptomatic, symptoms could be of any kind, according to the wide supposed scope of FN.

Hence, at this step, any full text *clinical research studies* regarding FN effect or benefit could be included, regardless their study design, i.e. appropriate or not to investigate an intervention effect or benefit but case reports, narrative reviews and discussion papers were not included for the reasons explained above. Also, articles were included regardless of the type of subjects and FN intervention investigated.

Step 3: For further scrutiny, we searched for prospective studies with at least one control group.

We selected those studies that related to the *effect* of an intervention, if it was investigated in one of two ways: the intervention could be compared 1) to a sham procedure (to control for the placebo effect), or 2) to an intervention already known to be effective, i.e. already tested against placebo.

Also prospective studies with other types of control groups (e.g. control group subjected to an intervention accepted in medical practice for the investigated condition) were included in order to investigate *benefit* of intervention. Studies could be included whether they were conducted or not with a random allocation.

Retrospective studies and studies without one or several control groups were not considered suitable at this step.

Extraction of information

Two checklists were created for the review: one related to the description of the studies (Table 1) and one to their methodological quality (Table 2). The latter consisted of two parts. The first part concerned all the *clinical research studies* included and contained only one item in relation to the design of the study and its potential appropriateness to investigate an effect or benefit.

If the design was not considered appropriate, from a methodological perspective, remedial propositions were given in order to promote the conduct of studies that would be able, in term of study design and methodology, to investigate whether the FN approach has an effect or benefit.

If the study design was considered potentially appropriate to study effect or benefit of an intervention, the article was reviewed for further quality assessment,

based mainly on some items proposed in the Cochrane recommendations [15]. For this we developed a seven-component quality checklist consisting of five risk-of-bias items, one item relating to external validity and one to unsystematic methodological errors as described in Appendix. Sometimes, other glaring methodological problems were mentioned in the text.

These items were added up for each article and percentages calculated taking into account the possibility of the occasional item being irrelevant (not applicable). No cut point was set for acceptability but the final score was instead used to illustrate, in a very basic way, the level of scientific rigor and credibility of the included articles.

All selected articles were reviewed independently and blindly by the two authors. Information was sought throughout the text but not in the abstract and discussion sections. Data collected in the two checklists by the two authors were compared and discrepancies resolved by consensus.

Initially, a third checklist, related to the results of the effect or benefit studies with the most robust designs was considered but finally not needed, as will be evident further in this report.

Data synthesis

The results of the selection process (Fig. 1) served to provide information for our two first research objectives. Tables 1 and 2 were created for the remaining research objectives. In both tables, articles were presented consecutively by year of publication. On their basis, a narrative synthesis of the collected data was provided for each research objective.

Results

Proportion of research studies and clinical research studies dealing with effect or benefit of Functional Neurology (research objectives 1 and 2)

As illustrated in Fig. 1, in a total of 168 texts found in the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*, 36 were identified as *research studies* (clinical and experimental). Among them, four were identified as *clinical research studies* dealing with effect or benefit of FN [16–19]. This means that 21% of the texts contained in its six volumes, published from 2011 to 2016 are *research studies* in general, and 2% of all texts are *clinical research studies* on the effect or benefit of the FN approach.

One of the *research articles* (Castellanos et al. [24]) was defined as not dealing with FN effect or benefit but was nevertheless reported on because it dealt with other relevant clinical issues. This scientific article was counted as a *research study* but not as a *clinical research study*, which would not change substantially the percentage of the latter. Nevertheless, for the sake of interest, it



Table 1 Descriptive checklist of eight *clinical research studies* plus one clinically relevant *research study* on Functional Neurology approach included in a critical review

1st Author Year Journal	Topic covered	Study subjects- Type -Age (range) -Origin -Number (males/females)	-Intervention -Control (other than sham) -Sham	-Outcome -How was it assessed?	When was it assessed?	Ethics approval? (with a clear mention of its origin)	Conflict of interest (reported or supposed)
Malkowicz 2006 [20] Intern J Neuroscience	Cortical visual impairment	Intervention group -Pediatric patients diagnosed with cortical visual impairment -13-120 months -Selected from a clinical database -21 (???) Control group -Patients diagnosed with cortical visual impairment -? -Unclear -67 (???)	-Individualized at-home <i>intensive visual program</i> , during 4–15 months -Retrospective control sample from a previous published study, probably on the natural course -None	- <i>Visual level -Developmental profile</i> (an evaluation tool, proper to the clinic from where the patients were recruited, which included a visual scale)	-Before -Follow-ups at least every 6 months if treatment lasted that long (only for intervention group, no exact time of follow-up(s) was given for the external control group)	Unclear	No mention about any potential conflict of interest
Daubeny 2010 [21] Int J Disabil Hum Dev	Brain function	Intervention group -Healthy adults -(?-?) -? -31 (???) Control group -Healthy adults -(?-?) -? -31 (???)	-10 upper extremity manipulations -None -Upper extremity sham manipulations with unloaded activator instrument	- <i>Blind-spot</i> size - <i>Blind-spot</i> measurement	-Before -Immediately after	Unclear	Authors reported to have no competing interests However, at least 2 authors are known to have business interest in relation to the topic.
Leisman 2010a [22] Int J Disabil Hum Dev	Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders	Intervention group 1 -Children with ADHD -6-11 years -Several clinics -36 (36/0) Intervention group 2 -“Normal” children -Age-matched with the ADHD group -? -15 (15/0) Control group 1 -Children with ADHD -6-11 years -Several clinics -42 (42/0) Control group 2 -“Normal” children -Age-matched with the ADHD group -? -16 (16/0)	- <i>Motor sequencing training</i> , 3-month course -No <i>motor sequencing training</i> -None	- <i>Signal detection performance</i> - <i>Signal detection task</i>	-Before -After	No information was found	No mention about any potential conflict of interest However, at least 1 author is known to have a business interest in relation to the topic.
Leisman 2010b [23] Int J Adolesc Med Health	Attention deficit-disorders/ Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders	-Child patients with ADD/ADHD -6-12 years -Clinics (said to be associated with one of the authors) -122 (94/28)	-12-weeks individualized <i>hemispheric specific remediation program</i> , 3 times/week, 1 h each (i.e. 36 sessions) -None -None	1- <i>Sensory and motor function</i> 2- Academic performance 3- Behaviors 1- <i>Functional assessments of sensory and motor function</i> 2- Wechsler Individual Achievement Tests	-Before -After	No information was found	Yes, 1 is reported: Patients came from clinics where 3 of the authors have financial interest in the topic. In addition, the project was funded by an institution with known financial interest in the area.



Table 1 Descriptive checklist of eight *clinical research studies* plus one clinically relevant *research study* on Functional Neurology approach included in a critical review (*Continued*)

1st Author Year Journal	Topic covered	Study subjects:- Type -Age (range) -Origin -Number (males/females)	-Intervention -Control (other than sham) -Sham	-Outcome -How was it assessed?	When was it assessed?	Ethics approval? (with a clear mention of its origin)	Conflict of interest (reported or supposed)
Carrick 2011 [16] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	Balance	-Adults -24-52 years -? -25 (16/9)	-Whole body rotation over 40 s -None -None	3- Brown Attention Deficit Disorders Scales -Stability and sway -Dynamic computerized posturography system (CAPS™ Professional System)	-Before -After	Unclear	Yes, 1 is reported: Two authors "are currently employed and are part owners of the Vestibular Technologies, LLC" In addition, the project was funded by an institution with known financial interest in this area.
Castellanos 2012 [24] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	Stated in title: traumatic brain injury but according to Methods: stroke	Intervention group -Adult patients with traumatic brain injury - 18-51 years -? - 15 (??) Control group -Healthy volunteers age and gender-matched -Age-matched with the intervention group -? - 14 (??)	-Individualized neuropsychological rehabilitation, 3-4 times/week for 1 h/session, during 7-12 months +/- associated with physiotherapy, speech therapy, and/or occupational therapy -“Control group” at baseline only (healthy subjects were not subjected to any intervention) -None	-Complexity and entropy of brain activity -Magneto- encephalography	-Before -After (only for intervention group, control group was assessed only at baseline)	Unclear	No mention about any potential conflict of interest
Carrick 2013 [17] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	Balance	Study 1: -Healthy adult volunteers -20-60 years -Recruited from advertisements -52 (31/21) Study sample was randomly allocated to 4 groups, details regarding age (range) and gender were not given for each of them. Study 2: -Healthy adult volunteers - 20-61 years -Recruited from advertisements - 56 (33/23) Study sample was randomly allocated to 4 groups, details regarding age (range) and gender were not given for each of them.	Both studies: -Whole body rotation over 40 s for all groups -Each group (4 per study) differed in terms of pitch and yaw planes during whole body rotation -None	Study 1: -Eight posturographic measures Study 2: -Six poturographic measures Both studies: -Dynamic computerized posturography system (CAPS™Professional System)	Both studies: -Before -Immediately after - 1 day after -1 week after	Unclear	No mention about any potential conflict of interest However, at least 1 author is known to have a business interest in relation to the topic. Another 2 have/ had a financial interest in the posturography equipment [16].



Table 1 Descriptive checklist of eight *clinical research studies* plus one clinically relevant *research study* on Functional Neurology approach included in a critical review (*Continued*)

1st Author Year Journal	Topic covered	Study subjects:- Type -Age (range) -Origin -Number (males/females)	-Intervention -Control (other than sham) -Sham	-Outcome -How was it assessed?	When was it assessed?	Ethics approval? (with a clear mention of its origin)	Conflict of interest (reported or supposed)
Sullivan 2013 [18] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	Migraine	Intervention group -Female adult patients or volunteers, all in midst of a migraine attack - 15-53 years -Referred from local medical clinics or recruited from advertisements - 13 (0/13) Control group -Female adult patients or volunteers, all in midst of a migraine attack - 25-38 years -Referred from local medical clinics or recruited from advertisements - 3 (0/3)	-Pneumatic ear insufflation, provided in roughly 30s intervals with a minimum of 3 insufflations -None -Otoscope with insufflation speculum with no pneumatic pressure applied	-Pain -Visual analog scale	-Before -During (after each insufflation) -30 min after -4 h after -24 h after	Unclear	No mention about any potential conflict of interest
Bousquet 2015 [19] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders / Autism-spectrum disorders	-Student volunteers with ADHD or ADS (identified with a "right-hemisphere weakness") -Hemisphere integration therapy tutoring center - 7-16 years - 12 (10/2)	-Individualized hemisphere integration therapy, 36 individual/group sessions, 3 times/week, 1 h each, combined with nutritional training and home exercises -None -None	1-Self-perception of academic, sensory, and motor abilities 2-Behavior 3-Cognitive skills 4-Sensory and motor skills 1-Semi-structured interviews 2-Brown Attention Deficit Scales / Gilliam Autism Rating Scales / Gilliam Asperger's Syndrome Scales 3-Wechsler Individual Achievement Test III 4-Perdue Pegboard performance / Dichotic Word Listening Test / Aerobic, core and balance exercises	-Before -After	No information was found	No mention about any potential conflict of interest

ADHD Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, ADD Attention deficit disorders, ASD Autism-spectrum disorders

will be described with the other studies, resulting in five relevant articles.

The handsearch in the section "*IAFNR News and Events*" of the FNRE issues provided four additional *clinical research studies* in our area of interest [20–23], all from other scientific journals. A total of eight *clinical research studies* on FN effect or benefit were therefore included in the review in order to fulfill our three other

research objectives, plus the additional clinically relevant study [24], bringing the number to nine.

Study objectives were not always clearly stated, and if (as was sometimes the case) the introduction was also unstructured and confusing, the whole text had to be scrutinized to identify the purposes of the studies. For this, we searched for terms such as "effect" and "effectiveness" in the texts. As shown in Table 3, the intention



to investigate an effect or some type of benefit of FN was clearly stated by the authors in eight of the included studies. The ninth (Castellanos et al. [24]) appeared to us first as having the same intention (as shown in Table 3), however, after further scrutiny and discussions, it was not considered to intend to investigate treatment effect or benefit of FN.

Description of clinical research studies purported to investigate the effect or benefit of functional neurology

A. General description

The nine included articles were published between 2006 and 2015, five in the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*, two in the *International Journal on Disability and Human Development*, one in the *International Journal of Neuroscience* and another in the *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*. Some authors had contributed to several of these articles: G Leisman co-authored five, and both FR Carrick and R Melillo co-authored four each.

None of the authors reported explicitly having an ethics approval from an identified ethics committee with an identification number of the application and approval (Table 1, col.7). Nonetheless, one reported to have ethics approval, two reported to have an ethics approval from an unidentified review board, which may or may not be the same as an official human research ethics committee, and another reported to be “approved” without more information. The remainder ($n = 5$) either mentioned that they acted in accordance with some ethical recommendations or provided no information.

As for conflict of interest, this was not mentioned at all in six of the reports, whereas two declared to have such a conflict and one declared to have none. Nevertheless, in the latter and in two of the “undeclared” articles, we identified potential conflicts of interest and, in the two “declared”, we identified some additional potential conflicts of interest (Table 1, col.8).

The choice of study design to investigate *effect* or *benefit* was often not respected and, in those studies where a full methodological assessment was done, the quality scores were low, never reaching 50%.

B. Description in relation to indications and Functional Neurology interventions studied (Research objective 3)

Indications studied

The selected studies included either symptomatic ($n = 6$) or asymptomatic ($n = 3$) subjects: adults ($n = 5$) and children ($n = 4$) (Table 1, col.3). Study samples ranged from

12 to 122 subjects, control subjects included (when a control group was present) (Table 1, col.3).

Three studies reported on subjects diagnosed with ADHD (Table 1, col.2). One of them included also subjects diagnosed with attention deficit disorders and another reported on subjects diagnosed with ADHD or with autism-spectrum disorders. These two studies mixed these types of subjects on the basis that they were supposedly identified as having one brain hemisphere deficient compared to the other, referring to the FN concept of hemisphericity [25]. Two studies had balance as its main topic, which was investigated on healthy subjects without balance or gait disorders (Table 1, col.2 & 3). The last four studies reported on: i) cortical visual impairment, ii) brain function asymmetry in healthy subjects, iii) traumatic brain injury in, apparently, post-stroke subjects, and iv) migraine in people having a migraine episode (Table 1, col.2 & 3).

Interventions studied

While the intervention was well described by most of the authors, in two articles this was poorly reported, making it difficult to fully understand what the FN approach contained [22, 24]. The FN interventions consisted of a single modality ($n = 5$) or were multifaceted and individualized ($n = 4$) (Table 1, col.4). Manipulative therapy ($n = 1$), motor sequencing training ($n = 1$), whole body rotation ($n = 2$), and pneumatic ear insufflation ($n = 1$) were tested as single modalities of intervention. Multifaceted programs were of different kinds, consisting of a combination of visual stimuli ($n = 1$), of a neuropsychological rehabilitation program, complemented or not by one or several physical modalities ($n = 1$), or of a combination of mainly motor, sensory and cognitive stimuli ($n = 2$).

The total numbers of treatment sessions and their frequency were disparate, ranging from a single intervention of 40 s to 4–15 months of a home program, which probably involved daily stimuli (Table 1, col.4). Outcome measures used to assess effect or benefit also varied from one study to another but all assessed them at least before and after intervention, at various time points (Table 1, col.5 & 6).

Consideration of major design and methodological issues (research objective 4)

All studies included in this review had major design and/or methodological problems in relation to study the effect or benefit of FN. In this section, the main issues that we identified are reported.

A. Study designs unable to detect effect or benefit of interventions



Table 2 Quality checklist of eight *clinical research studies* plus one clinically relevant *research study* on Functional Neurology approach included in a critical review

1st Author Year Journal	All studies included		Clinical research studies with appropriate or potentially appropriate study design to investigate an effect or benefit of Functional Neurology approach						
	-Design appropriate to investigate effect or benefit of intervention?	If design was not appropriate, major methodological considerations ("NA" for appropriate or potentially appropriate study design)	Were study subjects stated to be: -Blind to treatment allocation? (NA if no sham) -Naïve to types of intervention?	-Was a random allocation reported? -Was it stated that this was concealed? (NA if no random allocation)	Were interventions well described?	Was the assessor reported to be blind?	Outcome measure reported to be reliable or reproducible?	Was the person who analyzed the data stated to be blind?	Were losses or exclusions reported or obvious in results, tables or graphs?
Malkowicz 2006 [20] Intern J Neuroscience	Retrospective study of clinical database with external control group (from previously published study) -No	In order to investigate the effect of intervention, it would be necessary to include a concomitant control group to ensure that the two groups are similar and assessed at similar interval(s).							
Daubeny 2010 [21] Int J Disabil Hum Dev	-Randomized controlled trial -Yes	NA	-No -No	-Yes -No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Leisman 2010a [22] Int J Disabil Hum Dev	-Two randomized controlled trials (?) -Yes	NA	-NA -No	-Yes -No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Leisman 2010b [23] Int J Adolesc Med Health	-Case series from multiple clinics (?) or Multicenter outcome study (?) -No	In order to investigate an effect, a control group would be needed.							
Carrick 2011 [16] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Outcome study -No	In order to investigate an effect or benefit, a control group would be needed.							
Castellanos 2012 [24] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Outcome study with healthy untreated control group at baseline -No	In order to investigate effect or benefit, a similar control group subjected to another intervention would be needed.							
Carrick 2013 [17] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Four arms randomized trial (?) -Potentially	NA	-NA -No	-Yes -No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Sullivan 2013 [18]	-Prospective case series with sham	NA	-No -No	-No -NA	Yes	No	No	No	Yes



Table 2 Quality checklist of eight *clinical research studies* plus one clinically relevant *research study* on Functional Neurology approach included in a critical review (Continued)

1st Author Year Journal	All studies included		Clinical research studies with appropriate or potentially appropriate study design to investigate an effect or benefit of Functional Neurology approach						
	-Design appropriate to investigate effect or benefit of intervention?	If design was not appropriate, major methodological considerations ("NA" for appropriate or potentially appropriate study design)	Were study subjects stated to be: -Blind to treatment allocation? (NA if no sham) -Naïve to types of intervention?	-Was a random allocation reported? -Was it stated that this was concealed? (NA if no random allocation)	Were interventions well described?	Was the assessor reported to be blind?	Outcome measure reported to be reliable or reproducible?	Was the person who analyzed the data stated to be blind?	Were losses or exclusions reported or obvious in results, tables or graphs?
Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	treatment in 3/13 cases -Potentially								
Bousquet 2015 [19] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Outcome study -No	In order to investigate an effect, a control group would be needed.							

NA: Not applicable

(?): Uncertainty

*Reported as a pilot study by the authors but used for making conclusion about the effect of the FN intervention. Also the fact that this was a multicenter study was not clear

Studies without control group

Two articles reported on outcome studies (Carrick et al. [16], Bousquet [19]) and one on an outcome study or on a case series (it was unclear if this was a prospective or a retrospective study) (Leisman et al. [23]). Unlike reported by the authors of this study, we did not consider it as a pilot study. The reason is that a pilot study may be used for several reasons

before conducting a clinical trial but in such study it is not suitable to test clinical hypotheses and provide estimates of effect [26], which was the case in the article of Leisman et al. [23]. These three articles did not include a control group and were therefore not included in our final analysis.

Study with control group that was not concomitant

Malkowicz et al. [20] had as their research objective to study “the effects of an intensive visual stimulation treatment program on visual recovery” in children diagnosed with cortical visual impairment. This study consisted of a retrospective analysis of a clinical database with an external control group from a previously published study and was not included in our final analysis. The reasons for this were that this study lacks two important aspects: (i) study subjects were not included in the study at about the same time, meaning that the disorder and treatment may have become different over time, and (ii) as the intervention-and control- groups were not included under the same circumstances, it is likely that they were not comparable on all or most variables, apart from the tested intervention. This makes it difficult to ensure that it is the treatment that matters and not some other circumstances.

Nevertheless, the design of this study would be suitable to provide preliminary insights into a rare condition with poor prognosis. However, in the present study, since the authors state that “time is the factor of essence”, it would have been important, when

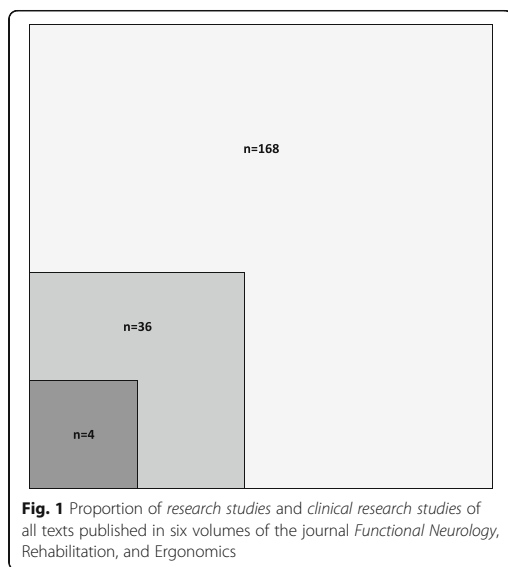


Fig. 1 Proportion of research studies and clinical research studies of all texts published in six volumes of the journal *Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics*



Table 3 Table illustrating the respective authors' intention to study the effect or benefit of Functional Neurology approach

1st Author Year Journal	Signs that authors intended to study effect or benefit (non-exhaustive list of concerned article sections and examples, limited to two examples per publication)
Malkowicz 2006 [20] Intern J Neuroscience	-Introduction/Objective "...the authors were particularly interested in studying the effects of an intensive visual stimulation treatment program on visual recovery." (p.1018) -Discussion "...it can be seen that visual stimulation programs improve a brain-injured child's ability to see significantly more than that of an individual not receiving visual stimulation." (p.1032)
Daubeny 2010 [21] Int J Disabil Hum Dev	-Title "Effects of contralateral extremity manipulation on brain function" -Discussion "The Sham manipulation did not have such an effect supporting that observations that it is the manipulation itself that is causing the changes in brain function." (p. not available)
Leisman 2010a [22] Int J Disabil Hum Dev	-Title "Effects of motor sequence training on attentional performance in ADHD children" -Abstract "Rhythm feedback training appears to have a significant effect on clinically observed changes in behavior in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder..." (p.275)
Leisman 2010b [23] Int J Adolesc Med Health	-Title "The effect of hemisphere specific remediation strategies on the academic performance outcome of children with ADD/ADHD" -Discussion "We here attempted a pilot study to determine if treatment that is preferentially aimed at a hypothesized interactive right hemisphere in ADD/ADHD children would have an effect on their sensory motor performance, as well as on cognitive function related to attention focus." (p.281)
Carrick 2011 [16] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title "The effects of whole body rotations in the pitch and yaw planes on postural stability" -Results "To investigate the effects of the Rotation, one tailed t-test for paired observations with..." (p.174)
Castellanos * 2012 [24] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title "Restoring the brain entropy and complexity after rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury" -Discussion "After rehabilitation, the local networks recover, understanding recovery as an approach to control values of organization." (p.212)
Carrick 2013 [17] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title "The effect of off vertical axis and multiplanar vestibular rotational stimulation on balance stability and limits of stability" -Method "To evaluate the effects over time the rotational stimulation could have on the balance of the subjects, each..." (p.347)
Sullivan 2013 [18] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Introduction/Objective "Our task was to investigate the effectiveness of this simple, non-invasive, low-cost and readily available bedside therapy." (p.94) -Discussion "..., it would seem unlikely that the observed effects are due particularly to stimulation of..." (p.102)
Bousquet 2015 [19] Funct Neurol Rehabil Ergon	-Title "The perceived effects of hemisphere integration therapy on students with identified right hemisphere weakness" -Conclusion "Before this study, there was no research regarding the effects of HIT on students with ASD." (p.292)

*This article was later considered not to deal with effect/benefit

comparing results in two different groups, that the visually impaired children were all at the same stage of the disease and assessed at similar time intervals, which is not clear in this report. The results may well be encouraging, for which reason this study could be considered as a first step to inspire a proper randomized controlled trial.

Study examining mechanisms of intervention rather than effect or benefit

An additional study, Castellanos et al. [24], is worth mentioning. As previously stated, we first assumed that it studied effect or benefit but, on closer scrutiny, it became clear that it did not claim directly this but that it dealt with other relevant clinical issues, namely the question whether the neurophysiological measurements of brain activity ("entropy" and "complexity") before and after treatment were linked to the clinical state of the subjects. To study this, the authors used a healthy control group for comparing their baseline values to the baseline values of the cases, to see if brain "entropy" and "complexity" were

different in the two groups. After a neuropsychological rehabilitation program, a comparison was made again with the previously obtained baseline values of the healthy untreated group to see if the study subjects now resembled more the healthy control group than they did at baseline. The results were measured against information on activity of daily living. In other words, our interpretation was that the authors tested if the brain function issues that they addressed through intervention had a clinical value.

B. Studies potentially able to detect effect or benefit of Functional Neurology

Daubeny et al. [21] (Table 2, row 3): The best study, in terms of methodological quality, still had a quality score of only 4/9 (44%). In this randomized controlled trial with a sham treatment, the "blind spot" was measured before and after joint manipulation and found to change in a particular pattern. However, neither reliability nor reproducibility of the measurement of the "blind spot" were tested within the article or reported as reproducible



or reliable on the basis of other studies. For this reason, it is not known if the findings in the present study can be trusted or if the findings could be fluctuating in a meaningless manner. Another problem is that the authors failed to describe clearly that its study subjects did not have a special interest or preconceived ideas in relation to manipulative therapy and the “blind spot”, as the origin of the study sample was unreported. This is important if study subjects could have been able to, willfully, change their visual reporting during the experiment. Further, as the validity of the “blind spot” as a neurological test with the ability to change with manipulative therapy has been questioned [8, 11, 13, 27], blinding in all possible ways is particularly important, i.e. also of the statistician, which was not described in the report. Therefore, although this study is a randomized controlled trial, it presents major methodological issues that potentially affect the validity of the reported results.

Leisman & Melillo [22] (Table 2, row 4): This study, 2/8 (25%), failed to report the use of a blind assessor and, therefore, it is not clear if the outcome could have been positively influenced or further aggravated by the absence of information on reproducibility of the collected data. Also, it was not reported if all study participants stayed to the end or even if they were all included in the final analysis. Although this study, apparently, reported on two randomized controlled trials consisting of one group of children with ADHD receiving or not receiving an intervention and a second group of “normal” age-matched children also receiving or not receiving (the same) intervention, we were unable to interpret the results. In fact, the authors did not clearly explain the results that were cryptically presented in a table and a figure and it was not clear to us exactly how comparisons were made between the four groups. Other methodological quality issues appeared when we completed our quality checklist.

Carrick et al. [17] (Table 2, row 8): Another report, 2/8 (25%), consists of two studies, containing analyses taking into account posturographic reactions in asymptomatic subjects, who were subjected to *whole-body rotations* in different planes. Eight and six outcome variables respectively were tested before and after the interventions at three different time intervals but there was not a control group that received no intervention. Admittedly, it would be difficult to make comparison to a sham *whole-body* intervention. For this reason, it would have been suitable to compare intervention to some other type of control in order to see if the tested intervention had some benefit. It would, also, have been possible to compare “correct” to “incorrect” intervention, to see if study subjects reacted differently to these in a logical manner.

In fact, when scrutinizing the research design, it gave the impression that this was the purpose, i.e. to compare “correct” to “incorrect” intervention. The study subjects were originally classified in relation to their different postural types in relation to “pitch” and “yaw”, i.e. the preferred position related to the head position when standing on a “perturbing foam cushion” with their eyes closed and the head rotated (“yaw”) and the head extended or flexed (“pitch”). Study subjects were divided into four groups according to their “pitch” and “yaw” predominance, after the foam cushion test, i.e. head in flexion, head in extension, head rotated to the left, head rotated to the right, and the various combinations of these.

Intervention was provided to all these four subgroups but not in the same way. The intervention was stated to be different in relation to the directions of “pitch” and of “yaw”. Thus, the study subjects were randomly allocated to receive a treatment (i) in the same directions as their preferred “pitch/yaw” postural reaction at baseline; (ii) in the same direction as their “pitch” position but opposite to their “yaw” position; (iii) in the opposite direction as their “pitch” position but in the same as their “yaw” position; or (iv) in totally opposite directions.

Presumably, although we did not understand the explanations of why this was done and what was expected, this design could be used to analyze if study subjects in the different groups would react differently on intervention, according to whether the classification and the intervention (i) matched, (ii) and (iii) matched partially, or (iv) did not match (as explained above). This sort of analysis would (perhaps) be able to provide information on whether the rationale for the intervention was correct or not. In addition to our checklist items, we noted that there were far too few study subjects in these two studies for the large number of tests and far too few values in each cell to allow for meaningful statistical analysis in the two reported studies. Also there was no report on the reproducibility of the “pitch” and “yaw” findings, meaning that the before-after measurements could be fluctuating regardless of intervention.

Further, the authors provide a very detailed and, in our opinion, confusing results section. This makes it difficult to understand if they actually tested whether the various intervention strategies based on the “pitch/yaw” classification resulted in different results for their many outcome variables. Only in the second study (p.355 l.15) is one of the stimulation groups mentioned. We were therefore confused as to whether the authors ignored the results of the matched intervention and only studied the change over time for different types of interventions and for different types of “pitch/yaw” classifications. This approach would in fact correspond to the study design of an outcome study. In other words, it looked to us as if they simply compared the baseline measurements at



the three follow-up time points (i) for all treated subjects according to their base-line classification (p.346 under “Research Questions, 1.4”) regardless if their treatment was matched to their classification or not, and (ii) for all four combinations of body rotation stimulation (p.346 under “Research Questions, 1.5”) regardless if the classification group was treated in a “matched” manner or not. If we assume this to be the case, this confusing and complicated report would not have used its clever design to its full potential. This study also fails in other methodological aspects, as reported in Table 2.

Sullivan [18] (Table 2, row 9): This author reported on a prospective case series, where the clinician was also the assessor of the treatment outcomes, which reached a quality score of 2/8 (25%). This study seems to reflect the work of a clinician who has tested an original neurophysiological theory in his clinical practice. Some but not all study subjects (3/13) were subjected to a sham treatment but without random allocation, hence lacking a proper control group. Nevertheless, the results seem encouraging and might incite a future proper randomized control trial, as suggested by the author. Therefore, this study could be considered an interesting preliminary study, to see if the topic is worthwhile being pursued, but does not allow the author to deal with any effect or benefit of the tested intervention, i.e. pneumatic ear insufflation in the treatment of migraine.

Description of the evidence available in relation to clinical effect or benefit of Functional Neurology (research objective 5)

Out of the nine studies that potentially dealt with effect or benefit of FN interventions, four were considered to, at least somewhat, be able to produce such answers. The quality scores of our quality checklist ranged from 25 to 44%, indicating an overall substantial risk of bias mainly in relation to: 1) blinding of study subjects, assessors and statisticians, and 2) concealment of random allocation. In addition, the outcome variables were never stated to be reliable or reproducible, making it reasonable to suspect that the reported results could be attributed to their inherent variability.

In light of these methodological shortcomings, we did not consider the results of these studies dependable. Therefore, we found no acceptable evidence that could support the notion that the FN approach has an effect or a benefit on the supposed indications tested, whether this was done on symptomatic or asymptomatic subjects. For this reason, the results of the various studies were not reported or illustrated as initially planned.

Discussion

Out of a total of 168 texts published from 2011 to 2016 in the FNRE journal, 36 were identified as *research*

studies in general, but only four could be classified as *clinical research studies* potentially investigating FN effect or benefit. A total of nine articles, five from the FNRE journal plus four from three other scientific journals (identified through the journal FNRE), were included for further description and analysis.

Due to design and methodological issues, no acceptable scientific evidence was found in relation to effect or benefit of various FN interventions. This was the case for studies on symptomatic children, mainly suffering from neurodevelopmental disorders, for symptomatic adults, suffering from migraines or traumatic brain injury, and also for asymptomatic adults on whom balance or “blind spot” changes after FN interventions were investigated. All had the hallmark of FN, i.e. targeting different parts of the brain, but did not bring any evidence on indications for treatment or for the best match between condition and intervention.

Considerations regarding the type of literature captured

The few *research studies* in general, i.e. covering FN topics or not, indicates that the authors who publish in this journal are more inclined to write discussion papers or narrative reviews than *research studies*. Further, within this small group of research articles, only a few were relevant for our review. Nevertheless, given the small percentage of *research studies*, it could be argued that research on FN has or has not been published extensively outside this journal. But, in a previous review, the present authors also noticed that only few scientific articles were easily available in general on the clinical aspects of FN but from a chiropractic perspective [1]. Thus, the present critical review also reveals this paucity of research evidence in relation to the effect or benefit of FN.

Obviously, academic inclined clinicians have a need to read and exchange. The FNRE journal seems to provide ample opportunities for this but there is an obligation on all scientific journals not only to discuss and claim but also to establish the basic scientific facts. This critical review failed to find robust evidence of the latter.

Methodological considerations of reviewed studies

The study design

Several studies did not even include a control group and only one compared the intervention group with a sham intervention in a randomized controlled trial.

In studies without control groups, only *outcome* can be reported; thus it is not appropriate to talk about effect or benefit. The reasons for this are that studies without a control group, showing improvement after intervention, may indicate a true effect, a regression towards the mean, or simply the natural course of a disease that gets better on its own or has its ups and downs, but it is not known what. Thus, the scientific interpretation is usually only of



a positive *outcome*, a potential benefit but certainly not of effect of intervention. This is the main reason why clinicians who see their patients improve cannot claim to have an “effect”, only hope there is, as there are no placebo groups possible in clinical practice.

Clearly, most of the authors of the articles included in the present review, as has been found before in another chiropractic research field [28], seem not to be completely familiar with the requirement to be meticulous about matching the research question to the correct research design.

The research methods

Each research design (e.g. surveys, clinical trials, population-based studies) has its specific requirements. These are based on logical rules that are well accepted in the scientific community, although errors and omissions are often observed in the research literature. The articles reported in this review were often non-observant of these rules, at least for those pertaining specifically to randomized controlled trials.

For randomized controlled trials, whether comparing treatment to a placebo procedure or another treatment, well established quality checklists exist, such as that used by the Cochrane collaboration [29]. We did not use this but extracted only few important points, as it was evident that the reviewed literature was deficient and that it would be meaningless to go into details. We conclude that the few items we selected were sufficient to point the reader in the right direction.

In sum, the major finding of this review was the lack of conventional use of research design and method in order to investigate any *effect* or *benefit* of the FN approach. Of serious concern was the lack of information regarding approval from an identifiable human research ethics committee. We also noted that although some did report conflicts of interest, some did not mention this aspect or seemed to do so incompletely.

Methodological considerations of own review

Searching one single journal had the advantage that we were unlikely to miss studies of interest. However, this does not mean that all the scientific literature on the FN field has been covered in the present review. Nevertheless, this was not our intent. The motivation to restrict the search to the FNRE journal was already evoked in the Introduction of this article. In fact, we have previously established that the FN literature was difficult to find [1]. The main reasons for this are that publications on this topic usually are not associated with the key word “functional neurology” and FN proposes so many treatment or intervention approaches (types of stimuli) for so many conditions that it would probably be impossible to design a relevant search equation to capture all the FN literature.

The quality checklist used in the review was specifically designed for our purpose but, potentially, other researchers might select other items to assess the methodological quality (including risk of bias) of the included studies. Nevertheless, given the problems relating to design and methodological issues discussed above, it is very unlikely this would affect the conclusion of the present review.

Also, we adopted a lenient approach for inclusion of the studies in our final analysis, selecting randomized and non-randomized studies, with or without proper control groups. A more stringent selection would have brought even less studies to discuss. This flexibility gave us the opportunity to address design and methodological issues in order to bring the reader, especially clinicians and health care students, some basic knowledge needed to effectively consume research reports. Not all health practitioners have adequate skills and experience in the reading of the research literature. This is despite the need to critically appraise the literature encountered during their career, even when such literature is promoted and produced by their colleagues. This is also true for FN, a movement within which research has a clinical and commercial component [30].

Conclusion

We can conclude that the FNRE journal, with a special interest in FN, contains only few clinical research articles in this field. Further, it is clear that over five years and twenty-four issues of this journal, no methodologically sound studies on the effect or benefit of the FN approach were published. In order to find out if there is, in fact, other relevant documentation on the effect or benefit of FN, a critical review of the scientific publications of its founder, FR Carrick, apparently actively involved in research, may be able to fill in the gaps regarding the scientific state of FN.

Appendix

Items selected for the second part of the quality checklist (Table 2) and their rationale

In relation to study subjects:

- **Were study subjects stated to be unbiased (blind and naïve)?** The reason why it is important that subjects are blind to the nature of the experiment is that subjects may be influenced by their expectations to treatment outcomes. For the same reason and when this is not possible to blind the subjects, i.e. when the intervention is not compared to a sham intervention but to another intervention, subjects have to be at least naïve to the intervention they receive.

- **Was allocation to study groups stated to be randomized and concealed?** The random allocation and its concealment minimize the risk of selection bias.



In relation to the experiment:

- **Was the intervention well described?** A sufficient description of the investigated intervention is one key element that allows to replicate the study, especially when this is a new and/or multifaceted intervention.

- **Was the outcome measure reported to be reproducible or reliable?** An acceptable reproducibility and reliability are needed to ensure that the study results are not simply due to normal variations of the measures over time or due to intra and/or inter-examination variabilities when performing the measures.

In relation to the assessment:

- **Was the assessor stated to be blind to group allocation?** When not blinded, the assessor may be influenced by his/her wish to obtain better results in the intervention group compared to the sham/control group.

In relation to analysis and data reporting:

- **Was the statistician stated to be blind to group allocation?** This is for the same reason that the assessor has to be blind.

- **Were losses and exclusions reported or obvious in results, tables or graphs?** Reporting losses and exclusions, if any, allows to appreciate in which extent this could affect the reported results.

Abbreviations

ADHD: attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders; FN: Functional Neurology; FNRE: Functional Neurology, Rehabilitation, and Ergonomics

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Availability of data and materials

The scientific articles scrutinized during the current critical review are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

The present critical review was registered in PROSPERO, with the reference CRD42018081862.

Authors' contributions

The two authors performed the critical review and interpreted the findings. ALM wrote the first draft and CLY provided comments for the subsequent drafts. Both authors revised and approved the final manuscript.

Authors' information

ALM is a chiropractor and presently enrolled in a PhD program at the University of Paris-Saclay. CLY is a chiropractor and a Professor in Clinical Biomechanics at the University of Southern Denmark. She has a background in epidemiology and systematic critical reviews and is the main supervisor on this PhD project.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

Authors declare there are no conflicts of interest. CLY is a senior editorial adviser to the journal *Chiropractic & Manual Therapies* but played no part in the peer review of the submission.

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ANNEXE III: Manuscrit _ *Unravelling functional neurology: does spinal manipulation have a clinically relevant effect on the brain? – a systematic review*



Unravelling Functional Neurology: Does spinal manipulation have a clinically relevant effect on the brain? - a systematic literature review.

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INTRODUCTION

Spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) is widely used by various health practitioners, including physiotherapists, osteopaths and chiropractors, to treat mainly musculoskeletal conditions, but some also use it for a variety of other problems [1, 2]. While the literature tends to support the benefit of SMT as a relevant treatment in the musculoskeletal area, no clear evidence seems to exist in relation to non-musculoskeletal conditions [3].

This lack of evidence contrasts with the theories purported by some therapists, including (but not restricted to) those who practice using the theoretical concepts of Functional Neurology, a chiropractic approach founded by FR Carrick [4]. In addition to musculoskeletal conditions, “functional neurologists” (i.e. Functional Neurology practitioners) also offer to deal with complex disorders such as neurodevelopmental disorders, neurodegenerative disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorders [5, 6]. Based on these concepts, some therapists also propose to enhance their patients’ performances (e.g. physical performances), including asymptomatic people [5].

In line with this approach, a current hypothesis is that the clinical benefits observed following SMT would be, at least partially, due to neurophysiological changes within the brain [6, 7]. Some practitioners are already using this concept claiming it to be a fact that SMT has a clinically relevant effect on brain function [7]. Furthermore, for some proponents of this hypothesis, including the Functional Neurology practitioners, disturbed brain function would explain a multitude of conditions [5]. This gives SMT the potential to be used for both musculoskeletal and non-musculoskeletal conditions. In fact, it is even stated to be one of the most easily available methods for manual practitioners to improve ‘brain function’ [7].

Within the scientific literature, different more or less clearly framed hypotheses exist in relation to the potential mechanisms involving the brain, which could explain clinical improvements following SMT [6, 8, 9]. The one that seems to prevail relates to the chiropractic concept of “subluxation”, which has developed over time [10]. Currently some authors purport that “subluxation” modifies the afferent inputs to the central nervous system [6, 11]. These authors state, in addition to this, that the “subluxation” is at the source of maladaptive neural plastic changes, including in the cerebral cortex, which in turn result in altered



processing and integration of subsequent afferent inputs and, consequently, altered motor outputs [11]. As a consequence, SMT is claimed to restore afferent inputs to the central nervous system (including to the brain) and result in appropriate motor outputs from the central nervous system.

Potential neurophysiological effects of SMT on the brain has been the focus of several recent experimental studies. As the brain is involved in many functions, its activities or alteration of activities after an intervention can be explored in several ways. Not surprisingly then, the studies in this field of research use various approaches and outcome measures to test the hypothesis that SMT has an effect on cerebral activity. For example, some studies investigated the potential effect of SMT on brain areas involved in pain processing and autonomic functions [8, 9], whereas others studied its potential effect on cortical somatosensory integration of stimuli from the upper limb [6].

Because studies are quite heterogeneous, it is difficult to understand and interpret the evidence in this area. Nevertheless, this task is needed to understand if assertions of the 'brain-mediated' hypothesis proponents are substantiated by scientific evidence. A narrative review on the topic by Haavik and Murphy was published in 2012 [6]. In this review, they concluded that some evidence supports a brain mechanism of action for SMT but whether this correlates to clinical benefits remained to be investigated. They also stated that such studies were underway. Several years have passed since that paper, and therefore such information should now be available. For these reasons, we undertook a systematic critical review of the literature, which had as its overall aim to investigate if SMT has a clinically meaningful effect on cerebral activity in healthy and/or symptomatic subjects. The specific research questions were:

In relation to sham controlled studies, i.e. the 'effect' studies:

- 1 - Is there an effect of SMT on cerebral activity?
- 2 - If there is an effect, for how long does it last?
- 3 - If there is an effect, is it associated with clinical improvement?



In relation to other controlled studies (inactive control or another physical stimulus), i.e. the ‘differences in outcome’ studies:

4 - Is there a difference in cerebral activity after SMT vs. inactive control?

5 - Is there a difference in cerebral activity after SMT vs. another physical stimulus?

METHODS

A systematic critical review of the literature was carried out to shed light on the research questions above. The review was registered in the PROSPERO international prospective register of systematic reviews (CRD42017074966). Some deviations from the original protocol were required in response to the material available in the reviewed articles, not known at the time of planning the review. These were: (i) the wording of the research questions was improved, (ii) the review was restricted to spinal manipulative therapy (i.e. did not include extremities), and (iii) the results were analyzed depending on the three categories of study subjects we encountered instead of the two we planned (i.e. including also “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects to the originally planned healthy and symptomatic subjects).

Search for literature

A systematic literature search was conducted in three electronic databases: PubMed, Embase and PEDro in April 2017 (updated between January and February 2018). The search strategy was initially developed for PubMed (available in Appendix 1) and then adapted to the two other databases in collaboration with a health science research librarian. In short, the strategy was designed by associating (i) terms related to SMT, for example “manipulation, spinal”, “musculoskeletal manipulations”, or “HVLA”, (ii) terms related to brain or brain structures, for example “brain”, “cerebrum”, or “cerebellum”, and (iii) terms related to the different ways of assessing cerebral activity, for example “transcranial magnetic stimulation”, “electroencephalography”, or “positron-emission tomography”.

Eligibility criteria

The eligible studies in this review had to include at least one control group, with or without random allocation. The control group could be subjected to a sham procedure, an inactive control, or another physical stimulus (other than spinal manipulation). Two- or several-arm



trials were accepted as well as crossover designs. These studies had to be conducted on humans, with no restriction regarding their study population such as age, sex, healthy or symptomatic subjects, or type of symptoms.

The tested intervention had to consist of manual or mechanically assisted spinal manipulation. Studies with combined or concomitant therapies were excluded, as it would not be possible to separate results obtained from the SMT and the other therapies. However, if all the study groups of a report were subjected to the same 'combined' or 'concomitant' therapies (e.g. pain medication), i.e. the only difference between the study groups being that one group was subjected to the tested intervention (e.g. pain medication AND manipulative therapy) but not the other (i.e. pain medication only), the article could be included.

Given our overall aim, the inclusion criteria were not limited to specific outcome measures or to specific measurement procedures. Studies were included if the authors explicitly stated that the outcome measures were used to assess 'brain function'.

There was no restriction in relation to the date of publication of the studies but only articles in English or French could be included.

Screening

Eligibility criteria were applied twice to the titles by the first author, who also searched the reference lists of the included full texts for additional relevant studies. Thereafter, the abstracts and then the relevant full texts were read independently by two authors (ALM and CLY) to verify if they could be included in the review.

Extraction of information

Three types of specific checklists were developed for this review relating to: descriptive items of included articles (Tables 1a-c), methodological quality assessment (Tables 2a-e), and report of results (Table 3a-c). Information of interest was extracted from the Methods and Results sections only.



Descriptive information

Tables 1a-c contain the main descriptive components of studies reporting on symptomatic subjects, on healthy subjects, and on “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects, respectively. Following the definition given by the authors, the “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects appeared to us as an independent category of study subjects, neither healthy nor in pain at the time of study. Although this latter definition changes somewhat from one publication to another, study subjects were usually described as having a history of “mild intermittent spinal pain, ache or tension (subclinical pain), and evidence of dysfunction in the spinal and/or pelvic joints” [12]; spinal/pelvic dysfunction referring to the chiropractic concept of “subluxation” [13-17]. In some of these studies, these study subjects were also described as not having yet sought treatment for their complaint [12, 15, 16, 18]. For each descriptive checklist, articles were presented grouped by (i) types of outcomes, and (ii) consecutively, by year of publication. The descriptive data were extracted from each included article independently by ALM and CLY and were later compared to minimize extraction errors.

Information related to methodological quality

The methodological assessment consisted of two aspects: (i) a ‘standard’ scrutiny of risk of bias and of an external validity criteria relevant for *effect* studies (see Tables 2a-e, items 1-5 and 8-10), and (ii) an examination of some basic technical aspects specific to the different methods used to measure cerebral activity (see Tables 2a-e, items 6 and 7). The rationale for each of these items is described in Appendix 2.

The first part was designed based on usual concepts in relation to risk of bias, such as those used by the Cochrane collaboration [19] and the scale proposed in the PEDro database [20]. These are items 1-4 and 8-10 described in Appendix 2, item 5 being related to the external validity. For the technical part of the methodological quality assessment, several experts were included in the process (MAA, MS and PS), providing advice on relevant items to include in the assessment and by reading and judging the technical quality of articles within their respective area(s) of expertise. These are items 6 and 7 in Appendix 2. The ten items used for the quality assessment of the included studies were selected based on their relevance for our topic and the type of studies we obtained through our literature search, i.e. mainly articles reporting on experimental studies in which no clinical outcomes were included.



The expert reviewers dealt with articles within their own area(s) of expertise only and paid most attention to the technical aspects. One of the authors (MAA), with special expertise on the types of statistical analyses used in experimental studies, reviewed all the statistical analyses. When deemed necessary, the experts provided comments in relation to the methodology and technical aspects of the studies they assessed. These comments could be used to discuss the findings in relation to each research objectives. Some of these comments have been included in this report (see Table 2a-e, col.12).

Thus, five reviewers contributed to some extent to the extraction of data into the quality checklist depending of their areas of expertise and their availability. Each article was independently reviewed for each methodological quality item by at least two of the authors. Data were later compared to minimize extraction errors. Discrepancies were planned to be resolved by discussion between the authors.

Information related to the results

The outcomes of the selected studies were reported in three tables (see Tables 3a-c), one for each type of control, i.e. 'sham', 'inactive', and 'another physical stimulus'. The control was considered as 'another physical stimulus' when it involved at least a manual contact (e.g. passive movement of a spine region, or joint preloading), or when it included other forms of manual therapies (e.g. joint mobilization, therapeutic touch). 'Inactive control' would consist of, for example, placing the study subject in side posture without manual contact or just resting. For each of these tables, results were reported grouped by (i) type of study subjects (symptomatic, healthy, and/or "subclinical neck/spinal pain"), (ii) type of outcomes, and (iii) consecutively by year of publication.

In accordance with the recommendations of Bland and Altman (2011) [21], we planned to report only results that reflected clearly differences *between*-groups (in trials consisting of at least two separate groups of study subjects). In cross-over designs, differences should be tested *between*-types of interventions. This means that results of studies that did not perform or clearly report comparisons *between*-groups or *between*-types of interventions would not be taken into consideration to answer our research questions. Therefore, if authors reported



significant *within*-group differences between baseline and follow-up, this would be ignored. However, our review revealed both unusual and confusing statistical reporting. We therefore decided to accept 'significant differences' post-intervention when results in two groups went in opposite directions, even if *between*-group testing appeared not to have been reported. This could be, for example, an increase of the outcome variable in the intervention group but a decrease in the control group with one of these two estimates being statistically significant. Some other cases of unclear statistical analysis occurred, such as instances when none of the reviewers was able to decide whether the authors had, in fact, performed an appropriate *between*-groups analysis. In these instances, we included the results in our final analysis in a 'benefit of the doubt' approach.

Only the primary outcomes of the included studies were considered.

Classifying articles by their methodological quality

Each article was checked for each quality item, giving either half of a point or one point for each fulfilled item as described in Appendix 2. Two quality scores were calculated, one for the risk of bias plus the item related to external validity (i.e. items 1-5 and 8-10), and the other related to the technical aspects specific to the different experimental conditions (i.e. items 6 and 7). Initially, this latter quality score was planned to include the appropriateness of the statistical analyses used in the included studies. However, because this aspect was found to be difficult to assess without a certain amount of subjectivity, we decided not to take it into account, rather providing comments in relation to the statistical analyses performed in these studies (see Tables 2a-e, col.12).

The first quality score was arbitrarily divided into 'acceptable' (68% to 100% of maximum number of points), 'medium' (34% to 67% of maximum number of points) and 'low' (0% to 33% of maximum number of points), to indicate the quality of the methodological aspects mainly in relation to risk of bias of studies. The second score was used to get an overview of the quality in relation to a few basic technical aspects of the studies. The two scores were separated to indicate that there are two aspects of this type of study that should be taken into account (see Tables 2a-e, col.1). Importantly, the requirements for scientific soundness (risk of bias) are the same as in any type of comparison studies, whereas the technical aspects often



are difficult to judge by readers, who do not have special expertise in the area of study.

Data analysis and synthesis

The various tables were used to report narratively the main findings in relation to our six research questions, taking into account the methodological quality of the articles, so that we would have more confidence in the studies of better quality than those with additional methodological deficiencies.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows a flow diagram of the study selection process. Of the 1514 initially screened articles, 18 fulfilled our inclusion criteria and were included in the present review. These were published in English between 2000 and 2018. The majority of studies (n=10), all on “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects, were conducted by research teams that included one specific author [12-18, 22-24].

All articles reported an ethics approval from an ethics committee or from a review board, with or without an identification number of the application and approval. As for conflict of interest, eleven studies declared to have none [8, 9, 12, 16-18, 23-27] , whereas the issue of conflict was not mentioned at all in the others [13-15, 22, 28-30].



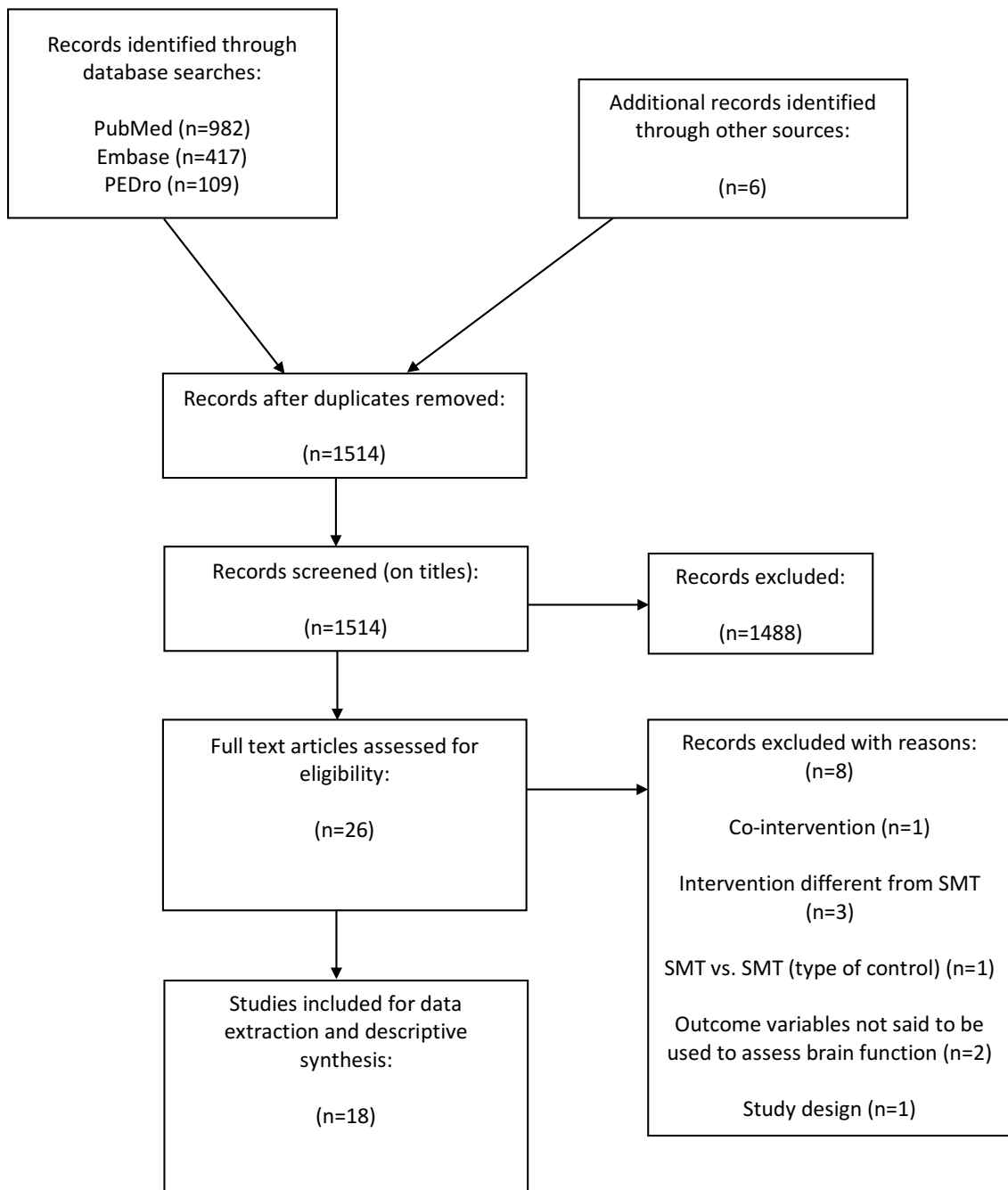


Figure 1. Description of the search for literature in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity



Description of studies (n=18)

Detailed descriptive information of each study is available in Tables 1a-c and briefly summarized below.

The size of the study samples of the 18 included experiments ranged from 10 to 72. Ten were conducted on “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects (Table 1c), four on pain free healthy subjects (Table 1b), and four on symptomatic subjects (Tables 1a), including one on subjects with experimentally induced low-back myalgia. In five of the ten studies considered in the present review as conducted on “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects, the study subjects were not explicitly described as such [13, 14, 22, 23, 31]. However, the description provided by their authors clearly referred to the definition of “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects [12, 15-18].

All the included studies were controlled trials, including two to three experimental groups, most of them with a random allocation (n=14) and mostly conducted using a cross-over design (n=10). Only one study reported the dates and duration of data collection [9].

Most of the included articles investigated high velocity low-amplitude spinal manipulation, whereas three investigated mechanically assisted techniques. The area where SMT was provided varied across studies to include all areas of the spine, whereas one study did not indicate where. In most of them SMT was provided ‘where deemed necessary’.

Most studies used as control group some passive type of procedure, considered in the present systematic review as ‘another physical stimulus’, or used a completely ‘inactive control’, whereas three attempted to use some types of sham comparators. One study compared SMT to two other manual therapies, i.e. spinal mobilization and therapeutic touch of the lumbosacral area.

The outcomes of all these studies were either described as *reflecting* some type of ‘brain function(s)’ or as *suggesting* some type of ‘brain function(s)’, meaning that some outcomes could also reflect, for example, neurophysiological changes at a segmental level (e.g. V-wave, motor evoked potentials, or cortical silent periods) [32, 33]. The outcome measures and



measurement tools used in the selected studies are briefly described in Appendix 3. In two studies, outcomes were assessed only *after* intervention or control, presumably for ethical reasons (see Table 1a). As can be seen in Tables 1a-c, in all other studies outcomes were assessed *before* and *after* intervention at various time points. However, six studies did not specify the time of re-assessment at all and four did not report it clearly.

The four studies conducted on symptomatic subjects described in their Methods section that they also assessed clinical outcomes, mainly pain intensity (see Table 1a). However, only two of them had as one of their research objectives to investigate whether a relation exists between potential brain changes and pain intensity changes after intervention, and none of these two assessed this against a sham intervention [27, 30].

Data extraction (n=18)

The data extraction process was relatively problem free with some exceptions. These concerned some articles in which the statistics and results sections were unclear [9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 27, 31]. This was resolved through multiple discussions. In addition, experts' opinion was sought in these areas and also the experts found the interpretation difficult in some of the studies [9, 15, 16, 22].

Data synthesis: methodological quality of the studies (n=18)

The level of methodological quality was generally 'low' (n=7) or 'medium' (n=8), except for three articles that were considered to be of 'acceptable' quality (see Table 4 for a summary). The most frequently encountered methodological weaknesses were: (i) the success of the blinding of the subjects was uncertain or unsuccessful (the three '*effect*' studies), (ii) no clear reporting whether the study was conducted on naïve subjects (most of the '*differences in outcome*' studies), (iii) no reporting whether the assessor was blinded to treatment group (most studies), and (iv) no reporting whether the person who analyzed the data was blinded to treatment group (most studies).

In relation to the few technical aspects we assessed, most of the studies were of 'acceptable' quality, reaching the score of 2/3, only two obtaining a score of 1/3 (*information will be updated when the reviewing of the six remaining studies will be completed*). However, our



experts did sometimes comment on unusual procedures (for detailed information see Tables 2a-e).

Table 4: Summary of quality scores and quality classification for 18 articles included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Type of study	First author / Year [ref]	Score* (risk of bias and external validity)	Quality classification
Sham studies	Sparks, 2017 [9]	5.5/7 (79%)	Acceptable
	Baarb��, 2018 [18]	3.5/6 (58%)	Medium
	Lelic, 2016 [16]	2.5/6 (42%)	Medium
Comparison studies	Christiansen, 2018 [17]	5/6 (83%)	Acceptable
	Gay, 2014 [27]	5/7 (71%)	Acceptable
	Kelly, 2000 [28]	3.5/6 (58%)	Medium
	Dishman, 2002 [29] Haavik-Taylor, 2010a [23] Haavik-Taylor, 2010b [24] Fryer, 2012 [26] Niazi, 2015 [15]	2.5/6 (42%)	Medium
	Haavik-Taylor, 2007a [13] Haavik-Taylor, 2007b [14] Haavik-Taylor, 2008 [22] Dishman, 2008 [25] Ogura, 2011 [30] Haavik, 2016 [12] Inami, 2017 [8]	2/6 (33%)	Low

* The quality score for each study could range from 0 to 6 OR 7, depending on their respective study design and the type of study subjects included. Each quality score was then converted on percentage to allow comparisons.

Quality classification: low: 0-33%; medium: 34-67%; acceptable: 68%-100%.

In two of the studies it was clear that the authors did not report having performed a between group analysis [13, 14]. Thus their results were not taken into account for our five research questions, and were therefore not reported in Table 3c. Another study [22] did appear to compare the outcomes of spinal manipulation on two different hand muscles rather than to compare the effect of SMT to a control intervention (see Table 2b col.12). This article was therefore not reported in Table 3c.



Also, three studies did not report results in relation to at least one of the statistical *between*-group comparisons they described in their respective Methods sections [15, 16, 27]. One of these studies was nevertheless considered in the data synthesis because the results in the groups went in opposite directions, and significantly so, suggesting that a statistical *between*-group comparison might have been significant as well [15]. Only these latter results were reported in Table 3c.

A total of 14 studies were finally used to answer our six research questions. One of these appears in two of three results tables (Table 3b and c) [25].

Data synthesis: answers to research questions (n=14)

Sham controlled studies (Table 3a), i.e. the ‘effect’ studies (n=3)

Only three studies used a sham comparator and were therefore considered as potentially able to provide answers to the research questions 1 to 3 [9, 16, 18]. However, in two of these the credibility of the sham is unclear [9, 18], and in the third, the sham was recognized as such by most of the study subjects [16]. Two were considered of ‘medium’ methodological quality [16, 18] and one of ‘acceptable’ methodological quality [9] (see Table 4). These studies, reporting on symptomatic subjects or on “subclinical neck/spinal pain”, investigated the potential *effect* of SMT on cerebral activity by using three different outcome measures, which did not allow to compare their respective results.

Summary of finding in relation to the research questions 1-3

In summary, and in relation to our three first research questions, three studies reported a transient (immediately to 20 minutes post-intervention) *effect* on cerebral activity of varied types after SMT vs. a sham comparator in symptomatic subjects and in “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects. However, in these studies SMT was compared to sham procedures with unclear credibility, or discovered as such by the study subjects. Also, the experimental findings were untested in relation to clinical improvement. Detailed results are reported below.



1 - Is there an effect of SMT on cerebral activity? (n=3)

Symptomatic subjects (n=1)

One study of ‘acceptable’ methodological quality [9], conducted on subjects suffering from mechanical neck pain, reported an effect on activation in response to noxious stimuli, as measured by fMRI using the blood oxygenation level-dependent (BOLD) signal, after SMT vs. a sham comparator. As shown previously, mechanical noxious stimulation resulted in increased activation in several brain areas associated with pain processing. A group comparison was reported, although it was unclear whether it was performed on the pre- post-intervention differences, as it should. This indicated increased activation in the SMT group relative to the sham group in the insular cortex, supramarginal gyrus and superior parietal lobe (presumably in sensory association/integration) areas. On the other hand, there was increased activation in the sham group relative to the SMT group in the cingulate cortex, the supplementary motor area, and the middle temporal gyrus.

“Subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects (n=2)

Two studies [16, 18] on “subclinical neck/spinal pain”, both of ‘medium’ methodological quality, reported an effect of SMT vs. sham comparator. One of these studies found a significant decrease of N30 somatosensory evoked potential peak amplitudes [16]. The other one reported a significant decrease of cerebellar inhibition following SMT [18].

2 - If there is an effect, for how long does it last? (n=3)

Symptomatic subjects (n=1)

The effect reported by Sparks et al. 2017 (study of ‘acceptable’ methodological quality) [9] on symptomatic subjects was an immediate effect. No effect beyond this time point was investigated by the authors.

“Subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects (n=2)

The effect reported by Baarbé et al. 2018 (study of ‘medium’ methodological quality) [18] on “subclinical neck pain” subjects was measured after intervention only once, at about 20 min post-intervention. Another potentially relevant study (Lelic et al. 2016) [16], also of ‘medium’ methodological quality, did not report the time of assessment after interventions.



3 - If there is an effect, is it associated to clinical improvement? (n=3)

Symptomatic subjects (n=1)

The study by Sparks et al. 2017 [9], considered of 'acceptable' methodological quality, on subjects suffering from mechanical neck pain, in addition to assessing brain activation in response to a noxious stimulus by means of fMRI, assessed pain intensity pre- post-interventions. However, they did not investigate whether there was an association between pain intensity changes and cerebral activity changes, making it impossible to answer this third research question. It is worth noting that the authors investigated whether there was a correlation between subjective ratings of the noxious stimulus intensity and change in activation in the insular cortex, but no such relationship was found.

"Subclinical neck/spinal pain" subjects (n=2)

None of the two studies on "subclinical neck/spinal pain" subjects [16, 18], both of 'medium' methodological quality, included clinical outcomes.

Other types of controls, specifically 'inactive control' (Table 3b) or 'another physical stimulus' (Table 3c), i.e. the 'differences in outcome' studies (n=12)

4 - Is there a difference in cerebral activity after SMT vs. 'inactive control'? (n=7)

Seven studies could be used for the fourth research question [8, 24-26, 28-30], four considered to be of 'medium' methodological quality and three of 'low' methodological quality (see Table 4). These studies, reporting on three different types of subjects, investigated the potential *changes* on cerebral activity in response to SMT by using varied outcome measures and/or experimental protocols, which makes comparisons difficult.

Summary of findings in relation to the fourth research questions

In these studies, of 'low' to 'medium' methodological quality, there were, in general, significant *differences in outcome* between SMT and the controls but not necessarily in the same direction. When brain areas were compared, differences were found, but again with some conflicting results. Detailed results are reported below.



Healthy subjects (n=4)

In healthy subjects, an immediate and transient increase of motor-evoked potential amplitudes after lumbar SMT was reported in two studies [25, 29], whereas one reported a decrease of motor-evoked potential amplitudes after lumbar SMT (approximately 10 minutes after intervention) [26]. The third reported no significant findings for motor-evoked latencies and cortical silent period durations [26]. Two of these studies were considered of 'medium' methodological quality [26, 29] and one of 'low' methodological quality [25].

A fourth study [28], of 'medium' quality, reported a significantly greater decrease of reaction-time to a mental reaction task post-SMT vs. post-resting without reporting the time of reassessment.

Symptomatic subjects (n=2)

The two studies conducted on symptomatic subjects were from the same research team and both of 'low' methodological quality; the first that was published being considered by its authors as a "proof of concept" study [30] which apparently led to their second experiment [8]. Both reported a significant increase of regional cerebral metabolic rate (glucose uptake) in some brain areas and a significant decrease of glucose uptake in other brain areas, sometimes with conflicting results (see Table 3b).

"Subclinical neck/spinal pain" subjects (n=1)

In a study of 'medium' methodological quality, Haavik and Murphy (2010b) [24] reported a significant decrease of the P22-N30 somatosensory potential peak ratio post-SMT but a significant increase of this ratio post-control intervention in "subclinical neck pain" subjects. They found no *between*-group differences for the other somatosensory evoked potential peak ratios they investigated.

5 - Is there a difference in cerebral activity after SMT vs. 'another physical stimulus'? (n=5)

Five articles could be used in relation to our fifth research question [12, 15, 17, 23, 25]. Two were of 'low', three of 'medium', and one of 'acceptable' methodological quality (see Table 4). Again, as they were conducted on different types of study subjects and/or most often used



different outcomes measures, the possibility to make comparisons between studies was limited.

Summary of findings in relation to the fifth research questions

Some significant *differences in outcome* between SMT and the controls were reported but results were mixed, in studies of 'low' to 'acceptable' methodological quality. Detailed results are reported below.

Healthy subjects (n=1)

One study of 'low' methodological quality [25], conducted on healthy chiropractic students, reported at 10 seconds post-intervention significantly greater motor-evoked potential amplitudes in the SMT group vs. a preloading control group.

"Subclinical neck/spinal pain" subjects (n=4)

The first study on "subclinical neck/spinal pain" subjects [23], of 'medium' methodological quality, found a significant decrease of the P22-N30 somatosensory potential peak ratio post-SMT vs. post-control [23]. There were no *between-group* differences for the other somatosensory evoked potential peak ratios investigated.

Haavik et al. 2016 [12], in a study of 'low' methodological quality, reported a significant increase in motor-evoked potential amplitudes in the SMT group compared to the control group. They did not find any *between-group* differences for two other variables they studied.

Christiansen et al. 2018 [17], in a study of 'acceptable' methodological quality, conducted on elite taekwondo athletes with "subclinical spinal pain", found a significantly greater V-wave amplitude post-SMT vs. post-control at each time point of assessment (immediately, 30, and 60 minutes after). Niazi et al. 2015 [15], in a study of 'medium' methodological quality, also conducted on "subclinical spinal pain" subjects, found a significant increase of the V-wave amplitude post-SMT and a significant decrease of this outcome post-control. However, the difference between these two conditions was not reported.



DISCUSSION

Summary of findings and their interpretation

This systematic review consists of 18 relevant articles, of which most were considered of 'medium' (n=8) or 'low' (=7) methodological quality, when taking into account mainly the classical risk of bias aspects necessary in this type of experimental design. In addition, their statistical aspects were often difficult to interpret because of unclear and/or unusual descriptions.

These articles reported on (i) whether SMT has an *effect* on cerebral activity compared to a sham intervention, and (ii) whether SMT *alters* cerebral activity in a different way compared to 'inactive control' or 'another physical stimulus', and this on any type of study subjects. Based on the studies using a sham intervention as comparator to SMT, it seems that SMT does have an *effect* on cerebral activity. Therefore, we also studied our main objectives, i.e. (i) how long this *effect* would last, and (ii) whether this *effect* was associated with clinical improvement.

The three studies using a sham intervention as comparator, two of 'medium' and one of 'acceptable' methodological quality, provided some evidence to support the hypothesis that SMT has supra-segmental neurophysiological *effects*. It was thus shown that SMT seems to have the potential to transiently alter (i) somatosensory integration of afferent inputs from the upper limb [16], (ii) cerebellar inhibition [18], both on "subclinical neck/spinal pain" subjects, and (iii) activation of several brain areas associated in pain processing on acute or subacute mechanical neck pain subjects [9]. However, whether these *effects* are beneficial for the brain remains to be established. Also, none reported whether such *effects* were lasting and clinically meaningful.

The 11 studies not using a sham intervention as comparator, most of 'low' or 'medium' methodological quality, also reported significant *between-group differences* but not necessarily in the same direction and also not systematically for each of the outcomes they studied.



In summary, based on both the *'effect'* studies and the *'differences in outcome'* studies, it seems that something does indeed happen within the brain in response to SMT. However, what this means remains elusive both in the brain and at a clinical level, and the researchers provide only hypotheses rather than interpretations. In addition, the reported findings have to be interpreted with caution given the general level of methodological quality ('low' to 'medium') of the included studies.

Showing that SMT is reflected by the brain activity does not necessarily mean that something 'positive' and clinically relevant happens in response to SMT. The significance of any putative *effect* in brain activity must thus be put into perspective by comparing it to *effects* in response to other types of (comparable) physical stimuli or other types of treatment. The question is therefore: Are the findings in relation to brain activity specific to SMT? For various methodological reasons, none of the studies could clearly answer this question. Furthermore, in order to claim brain involvement in the *effects* of SMT it should be expected that changes in brain activity following SMT can be shown related to the desired *clinical effects* of SMT. However, no information related to any clinical significance of such findings was unearthed in this review.

Methodological considerations of our own review

Three databases were searched and only one author applied eligibility criteria to the titles. Thus, it is possible that not all relevant articles on the topic were found. Nevertheless, the additional search of reference lists produced only three additional titles. All the following steps of the screening process and of the data extraction were made independently by at least two of the reviewers.

Most of the articles we obtained reported on experimental studies, in which no clinical outcomes were included. This type of studies is not strictly comparable to ordinary clinical studies using the randomized controlled trial design. The quality checklist used in the present review was therefore not 'standard' as it also appears us relevant to take into account the technical aspects of the various types of methods included in this field of research, mainly to critically appraise the risk of imprecision. Also, some usual risk of bias items, such as allocation



concealment, were not assessed in the present systematic review, judged less relevant for non-clinical randomized controlled trials.

Nevertheless, most of the items we selected consisted of generally accepted items to evaluate risk of bias [19, 20]. These items related to selection, performance, detection, attrition, and analysis risk of bias. On the advice of two of our experts, the number of items in relation to the technical aspects of the studies was limited. This approach was chosen (i) to keep the emphasis on risk of bias assessment, and (ii) to ensure a minimal but similar level of general technical requirements for all studies, whatever their outcome variables. For this same reason, only the first score of methodological quality was used to classify the articles, the second score being used to get an overview of the quality in relation to a few basic technical aspects of the studies. In other words, this latter quality score was only indicated to the readers and used for an informative purpose. Additional methodological concerns specific to the different studies, voiced by our experts, were summarized in a separate column of the quality checklists for the readers who would be interested in more information. These comments can be used as a basis for discussion on how to proceed with future studies of this type.

Because several of the statistical analyses and/or reporting were unclear and/or unusual, we finally resorted to a 'benefit-of-the-doubt'- approach. Thus, after many discussions and attempts at interpreting some confusing reports, we deviated from our previous criterion to include in the data synthesis only studies that clearly reported having tested outcomes *between*-groups. Instead, we decided to accept, for example, 'significant differences' post-intervention when results in two groups went in opposite directions, even if *between*-group testing appeared not to have been reported. However, such exceptions were noted in the Results section.

Studies were included also when the outcome variables they tested were not necessarily a reflection of brain function only, i.e. some would depend on both segmental and supra-segmental changes (e.g. motor evoked potential amplitudes, V-waves, and cortical silent period duration) [32, 33]. This means that results obtained via these outcome variables must be interpreted with caution; a fact that is often admitted by the authors of the reports. On the



other hand, being unrestrictive allowed us to cover the literature on the topic more exhaustively.

Many different outcome variables are used in research to measure cerebral activity, and this was also the case for the articles we included. Their heterogeneity in relation to (i) study subjects (symptomatic, healthy, and “subclinical neck/spinal pain”), (ii) outcome variables (16 different outcome variables for 18 articles), (iii) experimental protocols for each single variable, and (iv) generally rather low methodological quality, makes comparison of studies difficult and one or several meta-analyses impossible.

Methodological considerations of the included studies

The methodological quality was quite low in relation to well accepted risk of bias items. Admittedly, these types of studies require a lot of knowledge on technical aspects but this must not remove focus from the fundamental methodological requirements of research, namely the necessity to collect and interpret data in an objective manner.

For example, the studies considered to be of ‘low’ and ‘medium’ methodological quality often failed to report having used either a credible sham comparator or having been conducted on naïve subjects. As suggested by Fryer and Pearce [26], the blinding or naivety of the study subjects when ‘objective’ outcomes are used could potentially be considered not as important in purely experimental studies. ‘Objective’ here means that study subjects cannot usually willfully or inadvertently influence outcome. However, the *placebo effect* implies complex neurophysiologic responses involving the brain [34]. In our opinion, this makes the use of a sham comparator and the evaluation of its success relevant also for the ‘objective’ outcome measurements used in the included studies.

According to this review, the credibility of the sham comparator used in the three ‘*effect*’ studies must be considered uncertain for two and was recognized as such by the participants in the third. Thus it cannot be ruled out that the *effect* of SMT on cerebral activity was the result of contextual factors, rather than truly caused by the SMT, as discussed by Rossetini et al. 2018 [35]. This was acknowledged in one of these reports [9], where the authors note that changes in cerebral activation in response to noxious stimuli post-SMT may reflect subjects’



expectations.

In relation to the '*difference in outcome*' studies, the origin of the study subjects was reported in only a few cases. Thus we do not know if they had any preconceived ideas/expectations with respect to the study outcome(s). This problem could be compounded if several studies were conducted on the same study subjects.

Another example is that the blinding of the assessor and of the person who analyzed the data was generally poorly reported. Although it is fair to recognize that this reporting may be unusual in some fields of research (e.g. neuroimaging studies), some authors were transparent in relation to this point, which should encourage other researchers also to do the same.

Authors seemed often to be most concerned with the technical aspects of their studies. Nevertheless, although most of the studies were considered technically correct based on the basic items we assessed (*information will be updated when the reviewing of the six remaining studies will be completed*), comments were provided by our experts, suggesting that several of the experimental protocols of these reports lacked some of the standards, specific to such studies. Several comments were also provided from the experts on the statistical analysis, indicating that this was an area of concern, as the statistical analysis is at the heart of the validity of any significant findings.

Neuroimaging studies, which produce 'visual' answers, are perhaps easier to interpret for people without specific knowledge in neurological testing. Nevertheless, they present a challenge for formal analysis. For example, quantification of data is difficult. There are many analytic techniques available for these types of studies and there is a lack of consensus with respect to the most appropriate statistical thresholds to be used [36]. Therefore, this type of study needs to be replicated by other independent research teams. Obviously, this is required for any type of research, particularly when one specific research team dominates the area or when there is potential or real conflict of interest.



Conceptual concerns

In relation to all the studies

The rationale for investigating whether SMT acts through modulation of brain function was not always clear in the included studies. Nevertheless, most of them proposed that *changes* observed at the brain level would result (at least partially) from a ‘bottom-up’ mechanism, due to altered afferent inputs in response to SMT [8, 9, 12-18, 22-25, 29]. However, in addition to ‘bottom-up’ effects, SMT might change brain activity through ‘top-down’ effects, i.e. through contextual factor(s). This means that in absence of truly blinded subjects one cannot exclude a ‘top-down’ effect. In addition, a blinded assessor would be required. These are two methodological aspects often lacking in the reports we scrutinized, and therefore ‘top-down’ effects cannot be ruled out to explain some findings.

In relation to the studies using “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects

Articles, in which Haavik was one of the authors, included “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects in their studies [12-18, 22, 23, 31]. However, the definition of “subclinical neck/spinal pain” were not consistent in the various studies, so this concept remains unclear. In fact, it is uncertain whether this type of study subjects are clearly different from ‘ordinary’ healthy subjects in terms of neurophysiological parameters, such as somatosensory evoked potentials and motor evoked potentials [18, 37]. Most of authors of these articles proposed that the *effects or changes* they measured in the SMT groups reflect *improvement* of ‘brain function’ [12-18, 22, 23, 31]. This, obviously, raises the following question: If these subjects are not different from healthy subjects, what, exactly, would be improved?

Additionally, these studies rest on the assumption that it is possible to detect “subluxations” in people with “subclinical neck/spinal pain”; a concept that remains hypothetical. Overall, it is our considered opinion that some clarifications would be needed regarding this “subclinical neck/spinal pain” with “subluxations” concept to ensure appropriate interpretation of the results of these studies.

Gap between scientific level of evidence and its implementation in clinical practice

Functional Neurology practitioners use SMT as a treatment of ‘brain lesions’ [5] despite the lack of evidence of its clinical effect, as unearthed in this review. One example of how this



concept is taught within Functional Neurology is the seminar in which P Freud, a chiropractor from Canada, proposes to show how to 'adjust the brain' [38]. Furthermore, this is stated to be based on the latest scientific knowledge on the topic (as shown in Appendix 4).

Gap between scientific level of evidence and its popularization

Based on this systematic review, we conclude that there is presently no evidence indicating that SMT has a beneficial effect on cerebral activity or that the diverse findings identified in this review would be in any way indicators of a health benefit in general. It is therefore astonishing that one of the authors of this research, Haavik, promotes a clinical effect through commercial videos [39] and in an 'information' book for patients subtitled "A quest to understand Chiropractic from the inside out" [40]. This is contrary to the more careful interpretations in the research articles she co-authored [12-18, 22, 23, 31].

For example, Haavik wrote in her book: "Having your spine checked regularly, to ensure your brain is accurately aware of what is going on in and around your body, should be just as common as exercising every day and brushing your teeth. Everyone should have access to chiropractic care right from birth through to the day they pass away. I believe a lot of suffering could be prevented if this was the case." [40].

Another example is extracted from one of her commercial videos [41], which is mainly based on one of the studies included in the present review [16]. This video starts with the following message: "Chiropractic care really does change brain function!". After having given a lay-man interpretation of this study [16], it concludes: "Have you seen your chiropractor lately? You may want to have your brain's conductor fine-tuned too". It would be easy to interpret this as a suggestion that the brain is unable to do its job properly, but that a chiropractor can improve the situation. However, the section "*Study Considerations*" of that article [16] obviously does not support such claims and the authors of that article point out that it is not clear how long the changes observed in the brain last. They also state that it is not known if the observed changes are, at all, beneficial. There is therefore a gap between the guarded discussion in the study and the positive message of the commercial material.



CONCLUSION

According to the results of the present systematic review, it is premature to promote the use of SMT as a treatment to improve brain function.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for future research

Further research should be undertaken in this area and we recommend attention to the following:

- The clinical relevance of any brain changes should be investigated using symptomatic study subjects. Also, clinical outcomes should be included and the correlation between these and brain changes tested to establish if there is some type of improvement.
- To study the specific effect of SMT, proper sham procedures must be adopted and checked for success after the intervention to control for any unspecific effects, including placebo responses.
- Appropriate methodology in relation to randomized controlled trials, with appropriate attention to the potential sources of bias (e.g. blinding of study subjects, assessor, and statistician) should be respected.
- In relation to the technical procedures, standard protocols should be employed to ensure reproducibility of the outcome measure.
- Appropriate statistical methods and thresholds should be used.
- Any conflict of interest should be reported.
- Results should be replicated by independent research teams before their clinical acceptance.

Recommendations for the chiropractic profession

Presently, the chiropractic profession might wish to consider the potential consequences of encouraging undergraduate- and postgraduate courses on chiropractic approaches relating to the treatment of the brain via the spine. Obviously, this is also true for other health care providers who would be tempted to practice following such concept in relation to SMT.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOLD: blood oxygenation level-dependent; fMRI: functional magnetic resonance imaging;
SMT: spinal manipulative therapy.

ADDITIONAL FILES

Appendix 1: Search strategy developed for PubMed for a systematic critical review of the literature on the effect of spinal manipulative therapy on cerebral activity

Appendix 2: Items selected for the quality checklists and their rationale in relation to a systematic critical review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Appendix 3: The various ways used in the scientific literature for testing the hypothesis that spinal manipulation would have an effect on cerebral activity

Appendix 4: Commercial announcement of a chiropractic seminar entitled “Adjusting the Brain”



DECLARATIONS

The present systematic critical review was registered in PROSPERO, with the reference CRD42017074966.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The scientific articles scrutinized during the current critical review are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Competing interests

Authors declare there are no conflicts of interest. CLY is a senior editorial adviser to the journal *Chiropractic & Manual Therapies* but played no part in the peer review of the submission.

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Authors' contributions

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a smaller extent, positron emission tomography). CLY is a chiropractor and a Professor in Clinical Biomechanics at the University of Southern Denmark. She has a background in epidemiology and systematic critical reviews and is the main supervisor on this PhD project.

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Will be completed.



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FIGURE

Figure 1. Description of the search for literature in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 1a. Description of four studies reporting on symptomatic subjects included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 1b. Description of four studies reporting on asymptomatic subjects included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 1c. Description of ten studies reporting on “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 2a. Quality items and score of one study using a reaction-time task included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 2b. Quality items and scores of seven studies using transcranial magnetic induced outcome measures included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 2c. Quality items and scores of four studies using outcome measures in relation to somatosensory-evoked potential included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 2d. Quality items and scores of four studies using neuroimaging outcome measures included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 2e. Quality items and scores of two studies using V-wave as outcome measure included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

Table 3a. Results from three studies included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity, comparing spinal manipulation to a sham intervention



Table 3b. Results from seven studies included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity, comparing spinal manipulation to an inactive control

Table 3c. Results from six studies included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity, comparing spinal manipulation to another physical stimulus

Table 4. Summary of quality scores and quality classification for 18 articles included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity



Table 1a: Description of four studies reporting on symptomatic subjects included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st author Yr Ref	Design	Type of study subjects	Number of study subjects (males/females)	-Age (range) -Mean	-Type of SM -Type of control -Sham	How was cerebral activity measured?	When was cerebral activity measured?	Clinical outcomes assessed (measurement tool and time of assessment)
Ogura 2011 [30]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions "counterbalanced")	Volunteers, recruited at the local university, with mechanical cervical pain and shoulder stiffness	12 (12 / 0)	-21-40 -28	-Instrumentally assisted manipulation (location and nb of spinal levels adjusted unknown) -Control: 20 min of resting -No sham	Regional cerebral metabolic rate (rate of glucose consumption)	No before measurement After: between 35 to 55 min post- intervention or resting	-Stress Response Scale (immediately after interventions) -European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer Quality of Life Questionnaire-Core 30 (immediately after interventions) -Pain intensity (visual analogue scale) (before and immediately after SM, not before- after-20 min of resting)
Inami 2017 [8]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Volunteers (unclear origin – probably the same as Ogura et al. 2011) with mechanical cervical pain and shoulder stiffness	21 (21 / 0)	-? - 26	-Instrumentally assisted manipulation (where needed, anywhere at the spine, sacroiliac joints and/or scapulae, mean of 8 per subject) -Control: 20 min of resting -No sham	Regional cerebral metabolic rate (rate of glucose consumption)	No before measurement After: between 35 min to 1.05 h. post- intervention or resting	Pain intensity (visual analogue scale) (before and immediately after SM, and before and after 20 min of resting, only for 9/21 subjects)
Gay 2014 [27]	Randomized controlled trial	Volunteers from a previous clinical trial, recruited at the local university, hospital and	24 (1 / 5) manipulation group / (1 / 7) mobilization group / (5 / 5)	-? / ? / ? (required to be between 18- 44) -21 manipulation	-HVLA (X1, probably in the lumbar spine) -Control 1: grade III lumbar spinal mobilization -Control 2:	Functional connectivity	Before After: immediately	Pain intensity (101- point numerical rating scale) (before and immediately after in each group)



		surrounding community, who completed an exercise-injury protocol to induce myalgia in the low back	therapeutic touch group (7 / 17)	group / 21 mobilization group / 23 therapeutic touch group	therapeutic touch (light pressure with a contact to the sacroiliac joints) -No sham			
Sparks 2017 [9]	Randomized controlled trial	Volunteers (unknown origin) with mechanical neck pain less than 6 weeks of duration	24 (4 / 8) manipulation group / (4 / 8) sham group	-? / ? -36 manipulation group / 40 sham group	-HVLA midthoracic (X1) -'No' control - Sham : similar positioning of the subject and investigator's hands which were placed across the skin with minimal pressure (to mimic the HVLA procedure)	Blood oxygenation level-dependent signal (in response to noxious stimuli)	Before After: immediately	Pain intensity (11-point numerical pain rating scale) (before SM or sham procedures and after the final fMRI)

HVLA: high velocity low amplitude; nb: number; SM: spinal manipulation.



Table 1b: Description of four studies reporting on asymptomatic subjects included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st author Yr Ref	Design	Type of study subjects	Number of study subjects (males/females)	-Age (range) -Mean	-Type of SM -Type of control -Sham	How was cerebral activity measured?	When was cerebral activity measured?
Kelly 2000 [28]	Randomized controlled trial	Volunteer chiropractic students with evidence of upper cervical "subluxation"	36 (9 / 9) intervention group / (11 / 7) control group	-20-37 (both groups) -24 (both groups)	-Toggle (X1) -Control: 2 min of resting -No sham	Mental rotation reaction-time task	Before After: exact time unknown
Dishman 2002 [29]	Non-randomized controlled trial	Healthy college students, volunteers	24 (? / ?) (repartition in each group not reported)	-? / ? -25 intervention group / 27 control group	-HVLA L5-S1 (X1) -Control: side posture positioning without lower limb flexion, truncal torque, or manual contact -No sham	MEP amplitudes	Before After: -immediately (20 to 120 seconds) -5 min -10 min
Dishman 2008 [25]	Randomized controlled trial	Healthy chiropractic students, volunteers	72 (21 / 5) intervention group / (15 / 8) control 1 / (14 / 9) control 2	-? (3 groups, said to be between their 20s and 30s) -? (3 groups)	-HVLA L5-S1 (X1) -Control 1: L5-S1 preloading -Control 2: side posture positioning -No sham	MEP amplitudes	Before (10 MEP recorded during 100 seconds) After: immediately (10 MEP recorded during 100 seconds)
Fryer 2012 [26]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Healthy university students, volunteers	14 (10 / 4)	-18-50 -23	-HVLA L5-S1 (X2 to 4) -Control: bilateral side-posture positioning without truncal torque, or manual	MEP latencies and amplitudes Silent periods	Before After: exact time unknown (according to the Discussion approximately 10 min)



					contact -No sham		after)
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HVLA: high velocity low amplitude; MEP: motor evoked potential; SM: spinal manipulation.



Table 1c: Description of ten studies reporting on “subclinical neck/spinal pain” subjects included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st author Yr Ref	Design	Type of study subjects	N study subjects (males/females)	-Age (range) -Mean	-Type of SM -Type of control -Sham	How was cerebral activity measured?	When was cerebral activity measured?
Haavik-Taylor 2007a [13]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Volunteers (unknown origin) with a history of recurring neck pain or stiffness and with evidence of cervical spinal dysfunction, pain free at the time of the study	13 (5 / 8)	-22-45 -31	-HVLA cervical (x2 to 3 per subject) - Control 1: passive head movement without loading and thrust - Control 2: nothing -No sham	MEP amplitudes CSP durations	Before After: -within 0-10 min -within 10-20 min -within 20-30 min
Haavik-Taylor 2008 [22]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Adults (unknown origin) with a history of reoccurring neck pain or stiffness and with evidence of cervical spinal dysfunction, pain free at the time of the study	12 (7 / 5)	-19-45 -27	-HVLA cervical (nb unknown, may be at several levels) - Control: passive head movement without loading and thrust -No sham	MEP amplitudes CSP durations SICI SICF	Before After: exact time unknown
Haavik 2016 [12]	Cross-over controlled trial	Volunteers (unknown origin) with a history of spinal symptoms and with evidence of spinal and/or pelvic dysfunction but who did not yet sought treatment for this	12 (?)	-? -28	-HVLA cervical (nb unknown, may be at several levels) - Control: passive head movement without loading and thrust -No sham	MEP amplitudes Slope of the steepest part of the curve (k) Stimulus intensity required to obtain a response that is 50% of the max	Before After: exact time unknown



		and pain free at the time of the study (i.e. "subclinical pain" subjects)				(S ₅₀)	
Baarbé 2018 [18]	Randomized controlled trial	Volunteers (unknown origin) with recurrent mild neck pain and muscle tension, but minimal acute pain on the day of testing and who never sought treatment for this neck complains (i.e. "subclinical neck pain" subjects)	27 14 (6 / 8) intervention group / 13 (5 / 8) sham group	-18-27 intervention group / 19-24 sham group -21 (for both groups)	-HVLA cervical (x2 to 4 per subject) -'No' control - Sham : neck gently moved into lateral flexion and rotation in a similar manner to the actual neck manipulation, without applying the HVLA thrust	Cerebellar inhibition	Before After: exact time unclear (said to be immediately after motor acquisition task, i.e. CBI was re-measured about 20 min after SM)
Haavik-Taylor 2007b [14]	Two groups "pseudo-randomized" trial	Volunteers (origin unknown) with reoccurring neck problems and evidence of cervical spine dysfunction, pain free at the time of the study	24 (7 / 5) intervention group / (4 / 8) control group	-20-53 intervention group / 21-35 control group -30 intervention group / 27 control group	-HVLA cervical (x2 to 3 per subject) - Control : passive head movement without loading and thrust -No sham	SEP latencies and amplitudes: P14-18 complex, N20 (P14-N20 and N20-P27), and N30 (P22-N30) peaks	Before After: -within 0-10 min -within 10-20 min -within 20-30 min
Lelic 2016 [16]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Volunteers (origin unknown) with recurrent spinal ache, pain or stiffness and evidence of spinal dysfunction but who did not yet sought treatment for this and are	19 (9 / 10)	-? -26	-HVLA (where needed, in any spine level or sacroiliac joints, nb unknown _ may be at several levels) -'No' control - Sham : passive and active movements of the head, spine, and	SEP amplitudes: N30 peaks Strength of brain sources: contralateral somatosensory cortex, prefrontal cortex, cingulate cortex, and bilateral secondary	Before After: exact time unknown



		pain free at the time of the study (i.e. "subclinical pain" subjects)			body, similar to what was done for HVLA intervention, without loading and thrust	somatosensory cortex	
Haavik-Taylor 2010a [23]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Volunteers (origin unknown) with reoccurring neck problems and evidence of cervical spine dysfunction, pain free at the time of the study	13 (5 / 8)	-18-40 -28	-HVLA cervical (nb unknown, may be at several levels) -Control: passive head movement without loading and thrust -No sham	SEP MU/M+U peak ratios: P14-N18 complex, N20-P25 complex, and P22-N30 complex ratios	Before After: within 25 min
Haavik-Taylor 2010b [24]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Student and university staff members, volunteers, with reoccurring neck problems and evidence of cervical spine dysfunction, pain free at the time of the study	11 (4 / 7)	-22-40 -29	-HVLA cervical (nb unknown, may be at several levels) + 20min of typing task -Control: 20min of typing task only -No sham	SEP MU/M+U peak ratios: P14-N18 complex, parietal N20 (N20-P25 complex), and frontal N30 (P22-N30 complex)	Before After: exact time unclear (said to be immediately after HVLA+20min of typing task or after 20min typing task only, but also said to be within 25 min post interventions, i.e. possibly within 45 min after HVLA)
Niazi 2015 [15]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Volunteers (origin unknown) with recurring, intermittent low-grade spinal pain, ache, or tension, with evidence of spine dysfunction, but which did not	10 (10 / 0)	-? (required to be between 18-40) -28	-HVLA (where needed, in any spine level or sacroiliac joints, nb unknown _ may be at several levels) -Control: passive and active movements of the subject's head,	V-wave amplitude	Before After: exact time unknown



		sought treatment for this problem and are pain free at the time of the study (i.e. "subclinical spinal pain" subjects)			spine, and body into the manipulation setup positions, without loading and thrust -No sham		
Christiansen 2018 [17]	Cross-over controlled trial (order of interventions randomized)	Elite Taekwondo athletes, from the Auckland area, with "subclinical spinal pain" (i.e. intermittent low-grade spinal pain, ache or tension) and evidence of spine dysfunction, pain free at the time of the study	12 (6 / 6)	-? (required to be between 17-50) -25	-HVLA (where needed, in any spine level or sacroiliac joints, nb unknown _ may be at several levels) -Control: passive and active movements of the subject's head and spine into the manipulation setup positions, without loading and thrust -No sham	V-wave amplitude	Before After: -immediately -30 min -60 mins

CSP: cortical silent period; HVLA: high velocity low amplitude; MEP: motor evoked potential; nb: number; SEP: somatosensory evoked potential; SICF: short interval intra-cortical inhibition; SICF: short interval intra-cortical facilitation; SM: spinal manipulation.



Table 2a. Quality items and scores of one study using a reaction-time task included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st Author Yr of publication	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when cross-over study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Were the experimental conditions reported as standardized at least in some way for all groups (avoidance of visual or sound distractions)? (Yes / No)	Was the outcome measure: -well described? (Yes / No) -reported to be reliable (intra- or inter-examiners), or reproducible? If not, was the mean of several readings used, or was a reference provided for reliability or reproducibility? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Comments by the technical experts (i) on the statistical analysis, and (ii) in relation to the methodology and/or technical aspects
Kelly 2000 3.5/6 (58%) 2/3	NA	-Yes -Yes -No = Unclear 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	<p>1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The authors used a Student t tests to compare means instead of using a mixed-model ANOVA, followed by post-hoc tests if needed. -The authors did not study how RT (for correct answers) varied with angle, which is the main analysis conducted in the literature on such data. Therefore, without such a (usually linear) trend analysis it is not possible to understand if the overall mean effect observed by the authors is due to a change in slope (reflecting a change in processing speed) or in intercept (reflecting a change in stimulus encoding). <p>3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Between-group difference pre-post significant only with one-sided t-test. -The between-group difference pre-post is not reported for the simple RT task but it seems that a contribution of the simple RT to the RT of the complex task cannot be excluded. -Unclear whether errors were also counted.

NA: not applicable; RT: reaction time.



Table 2b. Quality items and scores of seven studies using transcranial magnetic induced outcome measures included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st Author Yr of publication	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when cross-over study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Were the experimental conditions reported as standardized at least in some way for all groups (control of subject positioning, and of EMG background activity)? (Yes / No)	Was the outcome measure: -well described? (Yes / No) -reported to be reliable (intra- or inter-examiners), or reproducible? If not, was the mean of several readings used, or was a reference provided for reliability or reproducibility? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Comments by the technical experts (i) on the statistical analysis, and (ii) in relation to the methodology and/or technical aspects
Dishman 2002 2.5/6 (42%) 2/3	NA	-No -Yes -No = No 0pt	Unclear 0.5pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	2: -MEP methodology does not correspond to standard: no motor threshold, no force control, and lack of random intervals between stimulus -The coil positioning seems not appropriate to lower leg MEPs.
Haavik-Taylor 2007a 2/6 (33%) 3/3	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	1: -The authors stated having used <i>planned comparisons</i> instead of <i>post hoc</i> analysis in order to minimize Type 1 error. However, <i>planned comparisons</i> do not minimize Type1 error. -They mention running a one-way repeated measures ANOVA with the factor "intervention". However, the degrees of freedom of the F for the result clearly show that authors treated "intervention" as a between-subjects factor, which is not correct.



Dishman 2008 2/6 (33%) 3/3	NA	-No -Yes -No = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	2: -MEP methodology is not standard: lack of precise motor threshold, and lack of random intervals between stimulus. -Fig. 1C indicates an inhibition in the time interval prior to SM, which may be responsible for significant differences and relative increase of amplitude after SM.
Haavik-Taylor 2008 2/6 (33%) 3/3	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	1: -The authors mention running 2-way ANOVAs for repeated measures with the factors "muscle" and "intervention" were applied to compare the effects of spinal manipulation on the two different upper limb muscles. However, the degrees of freedom of the F for the results clearly show that authors treated the two factors between-subjects, which is not correct. -They use t tests instead of post-hoc test for testing pairwise comparisons subsequent to the ANOVA. 2: The conclusions are farfetched as assumptions and deduction are made which cannot be backed by the results.
Fryer 2012 2.5/6 (42%) 3/3	NA	-No -Yes -No = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	Unclear 0.5pt	No 0pt	2: The coil positioning seems not appropriate to lower leg MEPs.
Haavik 2016 2/6 (33%) 2/3	NA	-Unclear -No -NA = No 0pt	No 0pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	2: -The recruitment curves lack measure of variance. -Feedback from background EMG is lacking, which is a conceptual concern and could explain observed increased in amplitudes.



Baarbé 2018 3.5/6 (58%) 3/3	-Yes -No -NA = Unclear 0.5pt	NA	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	None
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EMG: electromyography; MEP: motor-evoked potential; NA: not applicable.



Table 2c. Quality items and scores of four studies using outcome measures in relation to somatosensory-evoked potentials included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st Author Yr of publication	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when cross-over study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Were the experimental conditions reported as standardized at least in some way for all groups (not yet defined)? (Yes / No)	Was the outcome measure: -well described? (Yes / No) -reported to be reliable (intra- or inter-examiners), or reproducible? If not, was the mean of several readings used, or was a reference provided for reliability or reproducibility? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Comments by the technical experts (i) on the statistical analysis, and (ii) in relation to the methodology and/or technical aspects
Haavik-Taylor 2007b 2/6 (33%) Not yet completed	NA	-No -No -NA =No 0pt	Unclear 0.5pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Not yet completed	Not yet completed	No (but data were coded) 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	1: -No report of the testing of the normality of the data distribution. -To minimize Type 1 error, post hoc tests would be appropriate (instead of planned comparisons). -No between group comparison was performed.
Haavik-Taylor 2010a 2.5/6 (42%) Not yet completed	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Not yet completed	Not yet completed	No (but data were coded) 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	1: -Both parametric and nonparametric results on the same data are reported. Usually, either data are normally distributed and parametric tests can be used or data are not normally distributed and non-parametric tests must be used.
Haavik-Taylor 2010b		-No -Yes -Unclear									1: see comments in relation to Haavik-Taylor 2010a



2.5/6 (42%) <i>Not yet completed</i>	NA	= No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	<i>Not yet completed</i>	<i>Not yet completed</i>	No (but data were coded) 0.5pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	
Lelic 2016 2.5/6 (42%) <i>Not yet completed</i>	-Unclear -Yes -No = No 0pt	NA	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -No 0pt	<i>Not yet completed</i>	<i>Not yet completed</i>	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	1: -Unusual reporting of statistics: no report of which were the experimental factors and how they were treated (but probably pre/post was treated within-subjects and interventions as between-subjects), and of the detailed results for the <i>F</i> tests of the ANOVA.

NA: not applicable.



Table 2d: Quality items and scores of four studies using neuroimaging outcome measures included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st Author Yr of publication	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when cross- over study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the interventi on and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Were the experimen tal conditions reported as standardiz ed at least in some way for all groups (description of subject's head stabilization) ? (Yes / No)	Was the outcome measure: -well described? (Yes / No) -reported to be reliable (intra- or inter-examiners), or reproducible? If not, was the mean of several readings used, or was a reference provided for reliability or reproducibility? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Comments by the technical experts (i) on the statistical analysis, and (ii) in relation to the methodology and/or technical aspects
Ogura 2011 2/6 (33%) 1/3	NA	-No -Yes -Unclear = No 0pt	Unclear 0.5pt	NA	-No 0pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	-Yes 1pt -No 0pt	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	1: The extent the threshold for the voxel cluster size was defined as "10 to 50 voxels minimum". The purpose of this varying threshold is unclear. 3: Lenient statistical threshold: Z=3, extent threshold; 10 voxels.
Inami 2017 2/6 (33%) 1/3	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	No 0pt	-Yes 1pt -No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	No 0pt	1: The phrasing "(e.g., 10 voxels minimum)" suggests again (see the comment in relation to Ogura 2011) that this threshold was not fixed.
Gay 2014 5/7 (71%) 2/3	NA	-No -Yes -Unclear = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 1pt -No 0pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	1: -Authors "corrected for the number of separate RM-ANOVAs conducted across the 120 ROI-to-ROI pairs by using a p value less than .01 as significant." (p.618). This threshold ($p=0.01$) correction for multiple comparisons is not conservative enough. -There was neither between-groups



											statistical test at "pre", nor at "post". 3: Lenient statistical threshold: p=0.01 with 120 comparisons.
Sparks 2017 5.5/7 (79%) 3/3	-Yes -No -NA = Unclear 0.5pt	NA	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 0.5pt -Yes 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	-Yes 1pt -Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	1: The authors used an alpha=0.01 threshold for the fMRI analysis. It is not conservative enough in my opinion (as discussed by Eklund et al. 2015, and Lieberman & Cunningham 2009). 3: -Unclear whether statistical threshold applied across the whole brain or just for the region of interest. -It is unclear how the region of interest was defined

NA: not applicable.



Table 2e. Quality items and scores of two studies using V-wave as outcome measure included in a systematic review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

1st Author Yr of publication	-Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) -If yes, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) -If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)	-Were study subjects in studies with control group reported to be naive? (Yes / No / Unclear) -Was the origin of the subjects reported (Yes / No) -If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity) (NA when cross- over study design)? (Yes / No)	Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No)	Were the experimental conditions reported as standardized at least in some way for all groups (not yet defined)? (Yes / No)	Was the outcome measure: -well described? (Yes / No) -reported to be reliable (intra- or inter-examiners), or reproducible? If not, was the mean of several readings used, or was a reference provided for reliability or reproducibility? (Yes / No)	Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including in tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear)	Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No)	Comments by the technical experts (i) on the statistical analysis, and (ii) in relation to the methodology and/or technical aspects
Niazi 2015 2.5/6 (42%) Not yet completed	NA	-No -No -NA = No 0pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -No 0pt	Not yet completed	Not yet completed	No 0pt	Yes 1pt	No 0pt	None
Christiansen 2018 5/6 (83%) Not yet completed	NA	-No -Yes -Yes = Unclear 0.5pt	Yes 1pt	NA	-Yes 0.5pt -No 0pt	Not yet completed	Not yet completed	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	Yes 1pt	None

NA: not applicable.



Appendix 1: Search strategy developed for PubMed for a systematic critical review of the literature on the effect of spinal manipulative therapy on cerebral activity

(“manipulation, spinal”[MH] OR “spinal manipulation”[TW] OR “spine manipulation”[TW] OR “spinal manipulative therapy”[TW] OR “manipulation”[TI] OR “manipulation”[OT] OR “lumbar manipulation”[TW] OR “cervical manipulation”[TW] OR “thoracic manipulation”[TW] OR “sacroiliac manipulation”[TW] OR “joint manipulation”[TW] OR “peripheral manipulation”[TW] OR “musculoskeletal manipulations”[MH] OR “manual therapies”[TW] OR “manual therapy”[TW] OR “manipulation therapy”[TW] OR “manipulation therapies”[TW] OR “manipulative therapy”[TW] OR “manipulative therapies”[TW] OR “manipulation, orthopedic”[MH] OR “orthopedic manipulation”[TW] OR “chiropractic”[MH] OR “manipulation, chiropractic”[MH] OR “chiropractic manipulation”[TW] OR “chiropractic adjustment”[TW] OR “manipulation, osteopathic”[MH] OR “osteopathic manipulative treatment”[TW] OR “osteopathic manipulative treatments”[TW] OR “osteopathic manipulation”[TW] OR “osteopathy”[TW] OR “maitland mobilization”[TW] OR “glide mobilization”[TW] OR “HVLA”[TW] OR “high-velocity, low-amplitude spinal manipulation”[TW] OR “high-velocity low-amplitude spinal manipulation”[TW]) AND (“brain”[MH] OR “encephalon”[TW] OR “encephalons”[TW] OR “cerebrum”[MH] OR “cerebral hemispheres”[TW] OR “cerebral hemisphere”[TW] OR “cerebral cortex”[MH] OR “cortex, cerebral”[TW] OR “basal ganglia”[MH] OR “cerebellum”[MH] OR “cerebellums”[TW] OR “brain stem”[MH] OR “brainstem”[TW] OR “brainstems”[TW] OR “brain stems”[TW] OR “thalamus”[MH] OR “hypothalamus”[MH] OR “transcranial magnetic stimulation”[MH] OR “magnetic stimulation, transcranial”[TW] OR “stimulation, transcranial magnetic”[TW] OR “transcranial magnetic stimulations”[TW] OR “magnetoencephalography”[MH] OR “electroencephalography”[MH] OR “EEG”[TW] OR “electroencephalogram”[TW] OR “electroencephalograms”[TW] OR “fMRI”[TW] OR “MRI, functional”[TW] OR “functional MRI”[TW] OR “functional MRIs”[TW] OR “evoked potentials”[MH] OR “evoked potential”[TW] OR “positron-emission tomography”[MH] OR “positron emission tomography”[TW] OR “PET scan”[TW] OR “PET scans”[TW] OR “scan PET”[TW] OR “scans, PET”[TW] OR “tomography, positron-emission”[TW] OR “radionuclide tomography”[TW] OR “tomography, emission-computed, single-photon”[MH] OR “tomography, positron emission”[TW] OR “single-photon emission computerized tomography”[TW] OR “single photon emission computerized tomography”[TW] OR “single-photon emission CT scan”[TW] OR “single photon emission CT scan”[TW] OR “single-photon emission-computed tomography”[TW] OR “single photon emission computed tomography”[TW] OR “SPECT”[TW] OR “tomography, single-photon emission-computed”[TW] OR “single-photon emission computer-assisted tomography”[TW] OR “single photon emission computer-assisted tomography”[TW])



Appendix 2: Items selected for the quality checklists and their rationale in relation to a systematic critical review on the effect of spinal manipulation on cerebral activity

The number of points (pt) given for each item is reported in brackets and the way we assessed them is explained when needed. Items 1-4 and 8-10 relate to risk of bias assessment, item 5 to external validity, and items 6 and 7 to technical aspects of the quality assessment.

In relation to study subjects:

1 Were study subjects in sham controlled studies reported to be blind? (Yes / No / Unclear) If yes / unclear, was the blinding tested for success? (Yes / No) If yes, was it successful? (Yes / No)

2 Were study subjects in studies with a control group reported to be naïve? (Yes / No / Unclear) Was the origin of the subjects reported? (Yes / No) If yes, does it allow to exclude any interest? (Yes / No / Unclear)

The reason why it is important that subjects are blind or at least naïve to the nature of the experiment is that they may otherwise be influenced by their expectations to treatment outcomes.

We considered that it was important that the origin/source of the subjects was reported in order to check the credibility of their naivety in relation to the outcome of the study.

Because blinding of the subjects is difficult in manual therapies, we expected that the success of the blinding was tested at the end of the study by a questionnaire.

For studies comparing SMT to a sham procedure:

One point was given when the study subjects were reported to be blinded and the success of the blinding of the subjects was confirmed by a questionnaire at the end of the experiment.

Half a point was given when the subjects were reported to be blinded but the success of the blinding was not assessed.

No point was given when subjects were reported to be blinded but blinding was assessed and reported as unsuccessful for most of the study subjects.

For studies comparing SMT to another control procedure:

One point was given when the subjects were reported as naïve and this was credible, i.e. when study subjects were clearly identified as not being students or practitioners with an interest in SMT.

Half a point was given (i) when study subjects were reported as naïve but their origin was not reported or did not allow to exclude they had some interest in the outcome of the study, or (ii) when study subjects were not reported as naïve but that their origin indicated that there



was probably no interest in the study outcome(s).

No point was attributed when subjects were reported as naïve but were identified by the reviewers as potentially having an interest in the outcome of the study (i.e. students or practitioners with an interest with SMT).

3 Were study subjects reported to have been randomly allocated to study groups? (Yes / No / Unclear) (1pt)

The random allocation minimizes risk of selection bias. We only considered if such a procedure was mentioned or not, meaning that we did not deal with the appropriateness of the method of randomization. If the study used a cross-over design, the order of the interventions should be randomized. We did not investigate concealment because we did not think it is possible for examiners to 'pick' study subjects who would react in one way or the other to this type of experimental study.

4 Were study groups comparable in relation to symptoms when studying symptomatic subjects (duration and pain intensity)? (Yes / No) (1pt)

This should allow for relevant comparisons between groups in studies including symptomatic subjects. Subjects categorized as in "subclinical neck/spinal pain" were considered as comparable in relation to symptoms, meaning that this item was not applicable. This item was also considered irrelevant for studies conducted in a cross-over design.

In relation to the experiment (including the assessment):

5 Were the intervention and control(s) well described (at least where and how)? (Yes / No) (0.5pt for intervention / 0.5pt for control(s))

The SMT should be well described, i.e. the area(s) of the spine where the SMT was provided and the type of SMT (manually or mechanically/instrumentally assisted) should be reported. Sufficient details in relation to the tested intervention should allow for replication of the study. In a similar manner, also controls should be described.

6 Were the experimental conditions reported as standardized at least in some way for all groups? (Yes / No) (1pt)

This item was selected because some experimental conditions potentially interfere with the outcome measures, which may impact their reproducibility. For example, for studies using outcome measures induced by transcranial magnetic stimulation, we assessed if authors reported having controlled for the electromyography background activity and, for studies using neuroimaging, we assessed if authors reported having attempted to reduce head movement. Thus, these items differed for the various study types, depending on which experimental parameters were judged relevant by the technical experts.



7 Was the outcome measure:

- **well described?** (Yes / No) (1pt)

- **reported to be reliable** (intra or inter-examiners) **or reproducible? If not was the mean of several readings used or was a reference provided for reliability or reproducibility?** (Yes / No) (1pt)

Acceptable reproducibility and reliability will ensure that study results are not simply due to normal variations of the measures over time or due to intra- and/or inter-examiner variabilities when performing the measures. Given that some outcome measures are known to be substantially variable, e.g. glucose consumption measured by positron emission tomography and motor-evoked potentials evoked by transcranial magnetic stimulation, this point appeared needed to be checked. If the authors provided a reference from other researchers in relation to reliability or reproducibility of the outcome measures, the point was given.

8 Was the assessor reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No) (1pt)

When not blinded, the assessor may be influenced by his/her wish to obtain better or worse results in the intervention group compared to the sham/control group (expectation bias). Results could thus be transcribed or interpreted in a biased manner. In addition, the behavior of the assessor could have a placebo or nocebo influence on the study subjects.

In relation to data analysis and data reporting:

9 Were losses and exclusions of study subjects reported or obvious in result section (including tables or graphs)? (Yes / No / Unclear) (1pt)

Losses and exclusions should be reported to make it possible to appreciate to which extent any losses could affect the reported results.

10 Was the person who statistically analyzed the data reported to be blind to group allocation? (Yes / No) (1pt)

The person who analyzed the data has the possibility to decide on the removal of outliers, reorganization of data, and choice of statistical methods, for which reason this person should be blind to group allocation.

Some comments by the technical experts on the methodology and/or technical aspects of the included studies were provided in the last column of each quality checklist but not used to assess the quality of studies (see Tables 2a-e, col.12).



Appendix 3: The various ways used in the scientific literature for testing the hypothesis that spinal manipulation would have an effect on cerebral activity

Single-pulse transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) of the motor cortex may be used to assess excitability along the corticospinal tract (i.e. upper and lower motor neurons) by recording **(i) motor-evoked potentials (MEP)** of various muscles, at rest or during slight contraction [1, 2]. MEPs are the motor responses recorded in a muscle following the magnetic stimulation of the area of the motor cortex in charge of its control, stimulation that is adjusted in intensity to produce action potentials along the corticospinal tract. These are assessed using electromyography. Six studies included in the present review used MEP amplitude and/or latency as primary outcome [3-8].

During slight contraction, **(ii) the cortical silent period (CSP)**, which depends on both spinal and cortical mechanisms [1, 2], can also be recorded with single-pulse TMS. This is a period, just following the occurrence of a motor-evoked potential, where the electromyographic activity is inhibited, partly through a suppression of corticospinal output at the cortical level. Thus, although its first part is attributed to spinal mechanisms, the CSP appears to be considered primarily as a measure of motor inhibition from cortical origin [1, 2]. Three of the selected studies used CSP duration as a primary outcome [4, 5, 7].

Paired-pulse transcranial magnetic stimulation of the motor cortex allows to assess some intra-cortical inhibition process such as **(iii) short interval intra-cortical inhibition (SICI)** and **(iv) long interval intra-cortical inhibition (LICI)**; it also allows to assess intra-cortical facilitation process such as **(iv) short interval intra-cortical facilitation (SICF)** [2, 9]. Paired-pulse TMS involves two successive stimuli, a *conditioning stimulus* followed by a *test stimulus*, both directed to the same area of the motor cortex, provided at predetermined intensities and intervals, depending on which process would be measured [2]. Only one of the included study used these types of outcome measures [5].

Also, a specific paired-pulse paradigm allows to assess the functional connectivity between the cerebellum (where the *conditioning stimulus* is applied) and the motor cortex (where the *test stimulus* is applied), by assessing the **(v) cerebellar inhibition (CBI)** [10]. All these neurophysiological measures, i.e. SICI, LICI, SICF and CBI, are obtained by recording motor-evoked potentials that are compared to those produced by single-pulse TMS (as such described above) [2, 9, 10]. One of the included studies used CBI as primary outcome [11].

The cortical efferent outputs directed to lower motor neurons may also be investigated by measuring the **(vi) volitional wave response**, usually called *V-wave*, a reflex response generated by a muscle which is evoked by a **suprathreshold electrical nerve stimulation** delivered during its voluntary contraction [12, 13]. The *V-wave* is described as potentially altered by both segmental and supra-segmental mechanisms but seems to be considered by some authors as primarily reflecting supra-segmental changes [12, 14, 15], especially when it is used in addition to the H-reflex, a reflex response also evoked by electrical nerve stimulation, which may serve as a control for potential segmental changes [13-15]. Two selected studies used V-wave and H-reflex in attempts to distinguish between cortical and spinal mediated changes in response to SMT [16, 17].

Beside cortically mediated motor functions, the ability of the brain to process and to integrate somatosensory peripheral afferent inputs was also investigated after spinal



manipulation in four of the included studies [18-21]. Cortical somatosensory processing and integration of peripheral inputs can be explored by recording **(vii) cortical somatosensory evoked potentials (SEP)** following **peripheral nerve stimulation**. A SEP is an electrical potential, usually elicited by electrical stimulation of a peripheral nerve, for example the median nerve, and is recorded by surface electrodes placed along the lemniscal pathways (the pathway of the ascending signal), from the periphery to the cortex [22-24]. Thus, several peripheral, spinal, sub-cortical and cortical SEPs may be recorded following stimulation, each having more or less well identified neural generator(s) [22-24]. This was studied in two of the included studies [18, 21].

Still by recording cortical SEPs, but using a **dual peripheral nerve stimulation somatosensory evoked potential ratio technique**, the ability of the somatosensory cortex to integrate dual sensory input from two adjacent body parts, for example coming from the ulnar and from the median nerves, may be investigated [25]. This process refers to **(viii) cortical surrounding inhibition or reciprocal sensory inhibition** and is described as reflecting the capacity of the somatosensory system, including cortical areas, to enhance the contrast between two stimuli, allowing the information to be perceived and processed separately [25]. This SEP ratio technique was used in two of the included studies [19, 20].

Cognitive function has also been of interest in one of the included study with the use of a **mental rotation task** [26]. This is a cognitive task, during which two stimuli are presented with varying angular disparity and **(ix) reaction time** is measured. This would be the time between stimuli presentation and the decision of the subject, whether these two stimuli do or do not match when mentally aligned [27]. The *reaction time* is described as the sum of times needed to accomplish four steps that lead to subject decision: 1) stimulus identification, 2) mental rotation of the stimuli, 3) comparison of the stimuli once mentally aligned by rotation and response selection, i.e. do they match or not, and 4) execution or motor response. This type of task is thus used to assess the ability of the subject to mentally rotate two- or three-dimensional stimuli [27, 28].

Functional neuroimaging techniques are other tools to investigate potential alterations in brain function after intervention. **Positron emission tomography (PET) combined with the radioactive tracer Fludeoxyglucose (18F)** measures **(x) regional cerebral metabolic rates for glucose** as an indirect measure of neuronal activity [29, 30]. When changes of regional metabolic rates for glucose are investigated, the PET-scan makes it possible to assess the cerebral areas that are activated versus those that are deactivated, respectively areas that present an increase versus those that present a decrease in glucose consumption. This imaging results from the emissions produced by the radioactive molecules injected which are detected by the PET-scanner [29, 30]. Two of the included studies used regional cerebral metabolic rate as primary outcome [31, 32].

Finally, two studies [33, 34] chose outcomes assessed by **functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)**. fMRI is based on the same technology as magnetic resonance imaging and aims to detect hemodynamic changes that occur with changes in neural activity in the brain. Several fMRI approaches exist, the most common one being the **(xi) blood-oxygen-level-dependent (BOLD) contrast**. Activation studies typically measure BOLD signal changes in response to a stimulus (used by Sparks et al. 2017 [34]). When investigating **(xii) functional connectivity**, the BOLD signal across different brain regions is interrogated for temporal coherence (correlation in time) (used by Gay et al. 2014 [33]). Thus, potential changes in the



simultaneous activation of different brain areas is investigated through this fMRI approach in order to explore the neurophysiological mechanisms which may underlie a tested intervention.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBI: cerebellar inhibition; CSP: cortical silent period; fMRI: functional magnetic resonance imaging; LICI: long interval intra-cortical inhibition; MEP: motor-evoked potential; SEP: somatosensory-evoked potentials SICF: short interval facilitation; SICI: short interval intra-cortical inhibition; TMS: transcranial magnetic stimulation.



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ADJUSTING THE BRAIN



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- Appliquez la neuroscience dans votre pratique
- Obtenez des résultats supérieurs pour vos patients



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- Comment Harvey a-t-il récupéré son ouïe?

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- Examinons le cerveau du chiropraticien!
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EMPLACEMENT :



Titre : Neurologie Fonctionnelle : description et validité d'une approche thérapeutique controversée

Mots clés : Neurologie Fonctionnelle ; Chiropraxie ; Validité ; Pseudoscience ; Manipulation vertébrale.

Résumé : En France, les chiropracteurs sont autorisés à pratiquer des actes conservateurs, incluant la manipulation vertébrale, afin de prévenir ou de remédier à des troubles neuro-musculo-squelettiques. La profession apparaît toutefois composite, certains chiropracteurs proposant de prendre en charge également des troubles non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques, sur la base d'approches aux théories diverses. La Neurologie Fonctionnelle (NF) en constitue un exemple contemporain. Il s'agit d'une approche attractive, présentée comme scientifiquement fondée. Elle fait cependant l'objet de vives critiques, la qualifiant parfois de pseudoscience.

Cette thèse a pour but de contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de ce qu'est la NF ainsi qu'à une meilleure connaissance des faits scientifiques pouvant la sous-tendre, plus particulièrement dans un contexte chiropratique. Pour ce faire, une *scoping review* et deux revues critiques de la littérature ont été réalisées.

La *scoping review* a montré que la NF est une approche thérapeutique conservatrice

qui compterait de nombreuses indications, notamment non-neuro-musculo-squelettiques. Les "neurologues fonctionnels" recourent à de multiples outils thérapeutiques, dont la manipulation vertébrale, dans le but de stimuler le système nerveux, particulièrement des zones du cerveau. En NF, de nombreux éléments de langage sont empruntés aux neurosciences et différentes procédures diagnostiques et différents outils thérapeutiques sont issus de la médecine conventionnelle. L'ensemble que forme sa théorie et ses applications cliniques lui apparaît cependant propre et peu plausible. A travers une revue critique d'articles obtenus via un journal spécialisé en NF, aucune évidence scientifique probante n'a été trouvée à propos du *bénéfice* ou *effet* de la NF. A l'issue d'une revue systématique critique de la littérature, aucune évidence montrant que la manipulation vertébrale a un *effet clinique* via un *effet sur l'activité cérébrale* n'a été trouvée.

Ces travaux nous ont amené à conclure que la NF, utilisée dans un contexte chiropratique, relève probablement d'une pratique pseudoscientifique.

Title: Functional Neurology: description and validity of a controversial therapeutic approach

Keywords : Functional Neurology ; Chiropractic ; Validity ; Pseudoscience ; Spinal manipulation.

Abstract: In France, chiropractors are allowed to provide conservative care, which typically includes spinal manipulation in order to manage neuro-musculoskeletal conditions. However, some chiropractors also propose to manage non-neuro-musculoskeletal conditions. This alternative proposal is justified by using various approaches based on various theories. Functional Neurology (FN) is a contemporary example of one such approach. FN is an attractive method within the chiropractic profession, presented as scientifically based. However, FN is also vividly criticized, stated by some to be pseudoscientific.

The aim of this thesis is to better understand what FN is and the scientific evidence available on this approach, especially in a chiropractic context. For this, a scoping review and two critical review of the literature were conducted.

According to the scoping review, FN is a conservative approach, using a multitude of therapeutic tools, including spinal manipulation,

used to stimulate the nervous system, especially brain areas. Many symptoms and conditions are supposed to benefit from FN, including in the non-neuro-musculoskeletal area. While "functional neurologists" use many terms belonging to neurosciences and several diagnostic procedures and therapeutic tools from conventional medicine, the theoretical concepts and clinical applications of FN do not appear plausible in general. A critical review of articles obtained through a search of a specialized scientific journal that purported to report on the *benefit* or *effect* of FN did not bring any robust evidence on this topic. Also, through a systematic critical review of the literature, no scientific evidence was found in relation to any *clinical effect* of spinal manipulation via an *effect on brain function*.

This work led us to conclude that FN, when used in a chiropractic context, is probably a pseudoscientific approach.

