



Spinal Screenings

By Alan Rousso, DC, PCC

Overview

One way in which chiropractors market their practices is by doing community service. By offering services to the public, the doctor receives visibility in the community, resulting in a substantial increase in his/her number of new patients. A *Spinal* or *Posture Screening* is one of the most effective ways of marketing Chiropractic services. It involves getting Chiropractic to the prospective patient on a one-to-one basis. Spinal Screenings provide opportunities for people to have their nervous system and spinal health checked easily, at no cost, in a convenient setting and allows them to meet doctors of Chiropractic, and/or their representatives, and hear the message of health and wellness.

What follows is all the information necessary to help members acquire New Patients through the use of Spinal Screenings. It includes a description of the Spinal Screening procedure, a step-by-step explanation of how to set up and perform the screening, exact scripting the doctor can use to set up the screening, and scripting to do the screening and/or train a public relations person to use the procedure. You will also find surveys to be used at the screening, as well as, a training drill to evaluate the readiness of staff that may be hired to run the screening without the doctor being there.

To do a Spinal Screening, it is not necessary to be a Chiropractor.* It is necessary, however, to understand what needs to be done completely. If the procedures are followed, excellent results can be obtained. Improvising on these procedures can interfere with the results until you feel confident and secure about this procedure.

Spinal Screening What Does It Accomplish

The Spinal Screening can be called a Nervous System check-up or a Fitness Analysis because that is what it really is! A perspective patient's health (or fitness) is usually checked by scanning the function of their nervous system or by evaluating their posture. A person with a health problem will usually have nerve interference or a postural distortion and a person with interference or distortion will usually have a health problem.

The purpose of a screening is to inform people of the changes you have discovered through the use of your choice of screening equipment. This is the only purpose you can have. If your purpose is to get a lot of people into the office, you will succeed in signing up many people, but few of them will actually show up. If you remember that your purpose is to find out if a person's health problem is due to a chiropractic problem then you will expend your energy in the right direction.

Screeners

The Doctor

The most common and usually the most effective screener is the doctor. The ability to meet the doctor and talk to him/her is a very special feature of the screening. The doctor's knowledge of the person's problem is also an important factor. Since the doctor is supposed to be the expert, it is essential that the doctor know how to screen, even though he/she might not do much of the screening.

The CA

A motivated CA can be trained to do the screening.

The Professional Screener

This person usually does best if they have a good sales background, have knowledge of chiropractic and are confident where closing prospects are stressed. They need to be trained by the doctor to answer basic technical questions.

Steps To Set Up A Spinal Screening

Venue Selection

- a. Health Club
- b. Health Food Store
- c. Mall
- d. Health Fair
- e. Street Fair
- f. County Fair
- g. Retail Store
- h. Supermarket
- i. Your Call

Contacting the Facility

Who do you talk to and what do you say? Remember, you want something they have – their people or their customer base. Start thinking about what you have that they might want in return. To find out, ask yourself, “What are they trying to do to succeed, and how can I assist?” This type of thinking is critical to setting up a Spinal Screening.

Scripts To Set Up A Spinal Screening

Script #1

Screeners: "Hello, Mr. Croft, my name is Mary Jones. I'm the Public Education Supervisor for The Masters Circle Chiropractic Center. I represent various Chiropractic offices in this area."

"It's my job to set up health screenings sites for these doctors as community goodwill projects. We provide spinal screenings and spinal examinations for the public. We use a state of the art Spinal Analysis Machine (or a Subluxation Station)." It's probably your philosophy that when you do a good service for people, they remember when they need you. "When would be a good time for us to set up an appointment?"

Script #2

Dr: "Hello, my name is Dr. ____ and I want to tell you about a public service that my office provides in the community.

"What we do is offer free Posture/Nervous System Screenings complimentary to the general public. The procedure takes about one minute. Anyone who exhibits a possible problem is invited into our office for a more complete examination (at a discounted fee or at our regular fee – NO FREE!)

"The screening itself will enhance your normal business activities by providing an additional service to your customers. It takes about 3 to 4 feet of space and will create goodwill for your business."

"We will publicize the event and this will increase the traffic in your place of business."

"Which Thursday would be convenient for this screening?"
(Don't ask for permission, ask when you can do it).

"Great! I'll be in touch with you. Thanks!"

Materials Needed For A Spinal Screening

1. Table
2. Brochures
3. Signage
4. Surveys (Questionnaires)
5. Pens & Pencils
6. Appointment Book
7. Appointment Cards
8. Clipboards
9. Postural Analyzer, or Subluxation Station
10. Model Spine

You can also choose to have:

1. Balloons
2. A booth
3. Computer and Printer

Steps To Do A Spinal Screening

- 1. Offer anyone who looks at you, your sign, your face, or even comes near you an opportunity to receive a spinal screening, nervous system checkup or fitness analysis.** This is the hardest step of the entire process. You can't be introverted or be in a bad mood when you do a spinal screening. You simply smile and say:

Dr: "Hi! I'm Dr. _____ or CA name from _____ Chiropractic and we wanted to know when was the last time you had your nervous system checked (or had a postural evaluation)? It only takes a minute and you can receive some valuable information about your spinal health."

Many people will laugh and say no thanks, even if they really would like one! This is where a good screener will get people to participate even when they say no. You can attract them with a variety of questions, like:

1. "If there were a problem in your spine or nervous system, how would you know?" Or,
2. "Screenings help people become more aware of potential problems...don't you agree?"

Once you get the person to participate, other people will usually walk over and want to get their Spinal Screening also. You can give clipboards and pens to a few people at a time, so they can fill out their questionnaires while you screen other people.

Please Note: It is optimum to have 3 people available at your screening booth. One to invite people into your booth, one to screen and one to make the appointments and to close.

- 2. Have the person fill out the questionnaire.** You say, "OK, just fill in your name, town and check off any of the symptoms you want evaluated." When the person finishes, you look over the questionnaire and remember the person's name and his/her symptoms (if any).
- 3. Analyze the person's posture or conduct a scan of the nervous system.**

A. When using a Posture Analyzer: A Postural Analyzer or a S.A.M. unit is simply a small platform with a rectangular frame that extends upwards;

the person being examined stands on the platform in the footholds with his/her back to the frame. The rectangular frame has three strings running horizontally at hip, shoulder and head levels.

To check someone's posture, the examiner has the person stand up straight with his/her back to you (and the strings). Then tell him/her to look straight ahead and close his/her eyes. You check for head tilt by looking at the level of the ears. If necessary, push the person's hair out of the way and don't be afraid to touch the person. To do a proper screening you must touch the person.

Once you notice that one ear is higher than the other, simply tilt the top string so that there is a tilt with one side higher than the other. This does not have to be exactly the same height as the head, because you're going to show the person the distortions created. It's just a reference for you to use when you show the model spine or the distortion displayed on the Spinal Analyzer.

Similarly, check the level of the shoulders and hips, moving the string to indicate the tilt of each area, if there is one. To check the level of the shoulders, gently press down on them. To check the level of the hips, you put both your hands on either side of the waist feeling for the tops of the hips. Now look at the level of your hands and see which one is higher and tilt the strings accordingly.

4. Analyze the person's posture or conduct a scan of the nervous system.

B. When Using a Sub-Station – A Substation or Subluxation Station evaluates the integrity of the nervous system by measuring the electrical activity of the muscles (motor system) and the organs (autonomic system). Since you most likely will not be able to have the person undress, you are going to measure the activity of the neck or cervical spine. Using either the EMG portion of the Sub-Station or the Rolling Thermography, simply explain the results in the following way:

"Mr. or Ms. Patient, The scan can produce four different colors, each color represents varying degrees of interference to the nervous system. The white color means that the amount of interference is in the normal range. The green color means "go" for the beginning of a problem, which is why it turns green. The blue color means that the nerve is potentially being choked, which is why it turns blue. The red color means danger or the nerve is inflamed. Tell me what you see!"

The patient will always tell you they see some series of color as a result of the scan. (Proceed to "The Closing".)

5. Illustrate the postural distortion with the model spine.

Use the spine, bending it to indicate the distortion you just saw and say, "OK, here's what you have. You have a head tilt to this side and this can cause a postural distortion right here." Then touch the area of the person's spine where the distortion is occurring.

6. Explain the consequence of the distortion.

This is very simple. Just tell the person, "Whenever you have a postural distortion, it usually causes interference or a pinched nerve in this area." Then touch the general area on the patient's spine where this would occur (neck, low back or mid-back).

7. Explain the consequences of the pinched nerve in that area.

"Now, if you have a pinched nerve in this area (touch the area), it can cause neck pain, muscle spasm, headaches, etc..." This step flows immediately from step #4, practically in the same sentence when you're screening someone. You really have to know the effects of a pinched nerve to do this properly. You must rattle them off one after another, making sure to include that person's symptoms in the list. The person you're examining probably has four or five of the symptoms you've just mentioned, but he usually only admits to having one or two, so it's important to make sure you rattle off as many symptoms as possible. This way it really hits home, and the person realizes that you know what you're doing and can probably help him/her.

8. Tell him/her that the problem is fixable.

"The good news about a pinched nerve or nerve interference is that it can be fixed."

9. Explain the consequences of non-correction.

This is the most important part of signing up a new patient! You must tell the person that having a pinched nerve (or nerve interference) and leaving it uncorrected is one of the major causes of decreased health, degenerative changes and loss of the ability for the body to adapt. Also, the longer it goes without care, the more chronic it can become which is why so many people live on medication. Unfortunately, that just hides the pain while the underlying problem gets worse (this creates urgency).

The Closing

1. Invite them in

When using a Spinal Analyzer or a SAM unit

You can see the distortions of the person's posture, but you know nothing about the integrity of their spine. Tell them exactly that!

"Mr. or Ms. Patient, we can see there are distortions of your spine which are illustrated by our Spinal Analyzer, but we have no way of knowing for sure if there are any changes or damage to your spine or nervous system. When was the last time you had your spine and nervous system checked?" The person will usually respond never.

When using a Subluxation Station or Substation

After the patient has confirmed that they see colors as a result of the scan, simply ask them this question. "Should we leave it alone and pretend that nothing is wrong or should we do something about it?"

The person will usually respond that they would like to do something about it.

This gives you the opportunity to provide the person the following options:

"Mr. or Ms. Patient, is our office close enough for you to come in to check on this further or would you like us to make a referral to another office that might be more convenient?" The patient will almost always feel more confident coming to you because you are more familiar to them and the patient has already established the beginning of a relationship with you. Also, by providing a choice to refer them to someone else, you do not look as if you "need" the business and are truly coming from a place of service.

2. Make and appointment

Make an appointment for the patient right then and there. We recommend the "two-choice method." This means that we give them two choices for everything. For example, if today is Saturday, you say, "Would Monday or Tuesday be best for you?" "OK, great, would you like a morning or an afternoon appointment?" Again, give the patient two choices for the times you have set aside to process a New Patient.

3. Push them away.

One last suggestion about signing people up for their appointment... Don't pressure them into making an appointment. If you pressure them, they will sign up but they won't show. In fact, you must impress upon them that they must not make an appointment if they are not going to show up. They can always call to re-schedule, but ask them if they can't make it to "please call the office because we can only give out a certain number of these appointments per week and someone else could use the time...can I count on you?" The patient will either confirm that they are in fact interested in receiving services from your office or they will tell you that they are simply not interested.

This will allow you to schedule your appointment book more efficiently for those patients who are truly interested in your services.

4. Last Step

When the patient leaves the screening, make sure the questionnaire has the patient's appointment and the notes, which will help you separate your questionnaire's into three categories:

- People who made appointments
- People who were interested but could not commit to a time
- People who were not interested

When you return to your office, go over the questionnaires. Give and get feedback from each of your team members. This can prove invaluable when doing follow up phone calls.

CA Follow-Up: The Key To Success

You would think that 90% of the work has been done, wouldn't you? In the best of systems this will only bring about 20-25% of the new patients in for their first appointment.

Remember, these people weren't necessarily looking for a chiropractor when they found you. They were probably looking for something else. What they walk away from the screening with is an appointment to go to a place they never have been, to see a person they may never have met and to try a health care alternative they many never have experienced.

What's the solution? Enter Super CA. This CA receives the names, addresses, and phone numbers on the screening sheets and starts her two-fold mission:

1. Call everyone who made an appointment and confirm it using the following script.
2. Call everyone who expressed an interest but did not make an appointment using the second script.

Script #1 – Screening Follow-up call

CA: "Hello Mrs. Smith? This is Joy, from The Masters Circle Chiropractic Center in Jericho. I understand you met Dr. ____ over the weekend (or, I remember meeting you over the weekend) and you made a decision to have your spine and nervous system further evaluated."

"Your appointment was scheduled for ____AM on Thursday. Is that correct?"
Now do I have the correct spelling of your name? And your address is_____." (Get all other pertinent information).

"Terrific, I look forward to seeing you!"

Script #2 – Those Who Did Not Schedule at the Screening

CA: "Is this Mrs. Jones? Mrs. Jones, this is Joy at The Masters Circle Chiropractic Center in Jericho. I understand that you met Dr. _____ at the _____ Mall this weekend and that you were interested in making an appointment to have your spine and nervous system checked, but were unable to schedule. Is that right? What would be better for you Mrs. Smith, this week or next?"

Follow-Up Letter

Dear _____,

It was a pleasure meeting you at the (location) on (day/date). You may recall participating in a spinal screening to help determine your health needs.

Performing these screenings allows you to better understand the importance of your spinal structure and the function of your nervous system as it relates to your overall health, as well as, the prevention of future problems.

Based on a review of the findings of your screening, there are some aspects of your structure and nervous system that may require attention.

You are entitled to a complete follow-up examination at a nominal charge, to more thoroughly assess your health needs at this time.

Please contact our office for your special appointment time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in good health,

Doctor's name