

Stouffville Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Perfect weed-free lawn not so important today

People have begun the ritual of spraying toxic chemicals on lawns, parks and gardens in a bid to eliminate the undesirable insects and weeds that are the bane of the suburban ideal.

Yet the blind pursuit of weed-free, perfectly manicured communities is no longer occurring without question.

In recent years, the number of residents calling for an end to the use of chemicals for cosmetic reasons has skyrocketed.

And community leaders across the country are responding, buoyed in part by last year's Supreme Court ruling allowing Hudson, Que. to ban pesticides on residential lawns.

Most of York Region's municipalities have already dramatically reduced pesticide use.

Newmarket, Aurora and Whitchurch-Stouffville have cut back pesticide use — you've likely noticed dandelions in the parks.

On the heels of this, the region's own pesticide reduction task force is urging the adoption of guidelines sanctioning the restriction in the "non-essential" use of pesticide on its lands.

The guidelines stress preventive measures and the use of "reduced risk products" when chemical control treatments are necessary.

As well, the region intends to continue its public awareness campaign to encourage private property owners to refrain from using pesticides.

The guidelines fall far short of a ban similar to the one in Hudson that even forbade the use of pesticides on private property, but the region states it does not have the legal ability to enforce a ban or restriction through a bylaw.

Meanwhile, anti-pesticide advocates, such as York Region's Environmental Alliance, will continue their campaign to have pesticides such as 2,4-D banned in municipal bylaws.

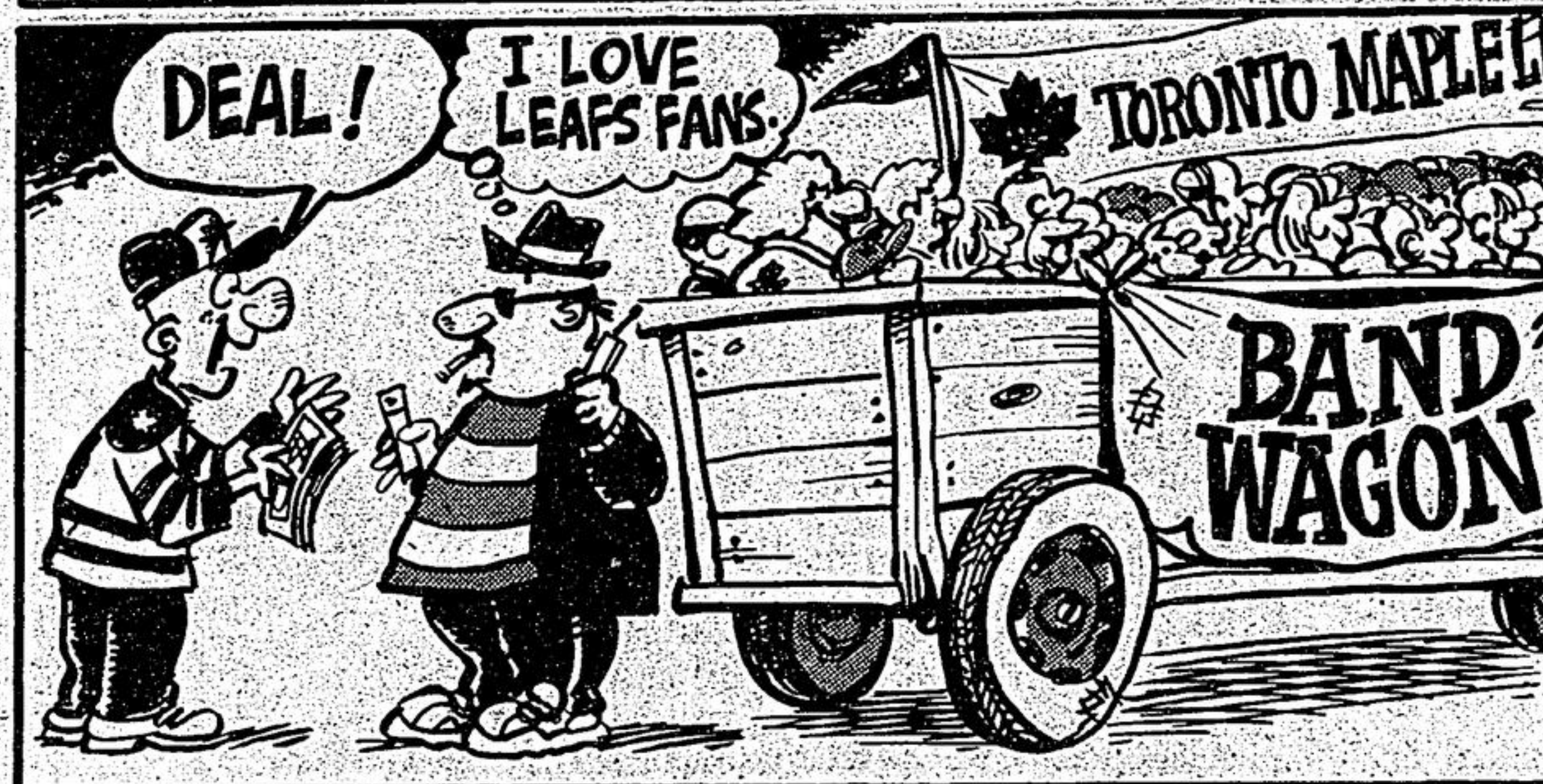
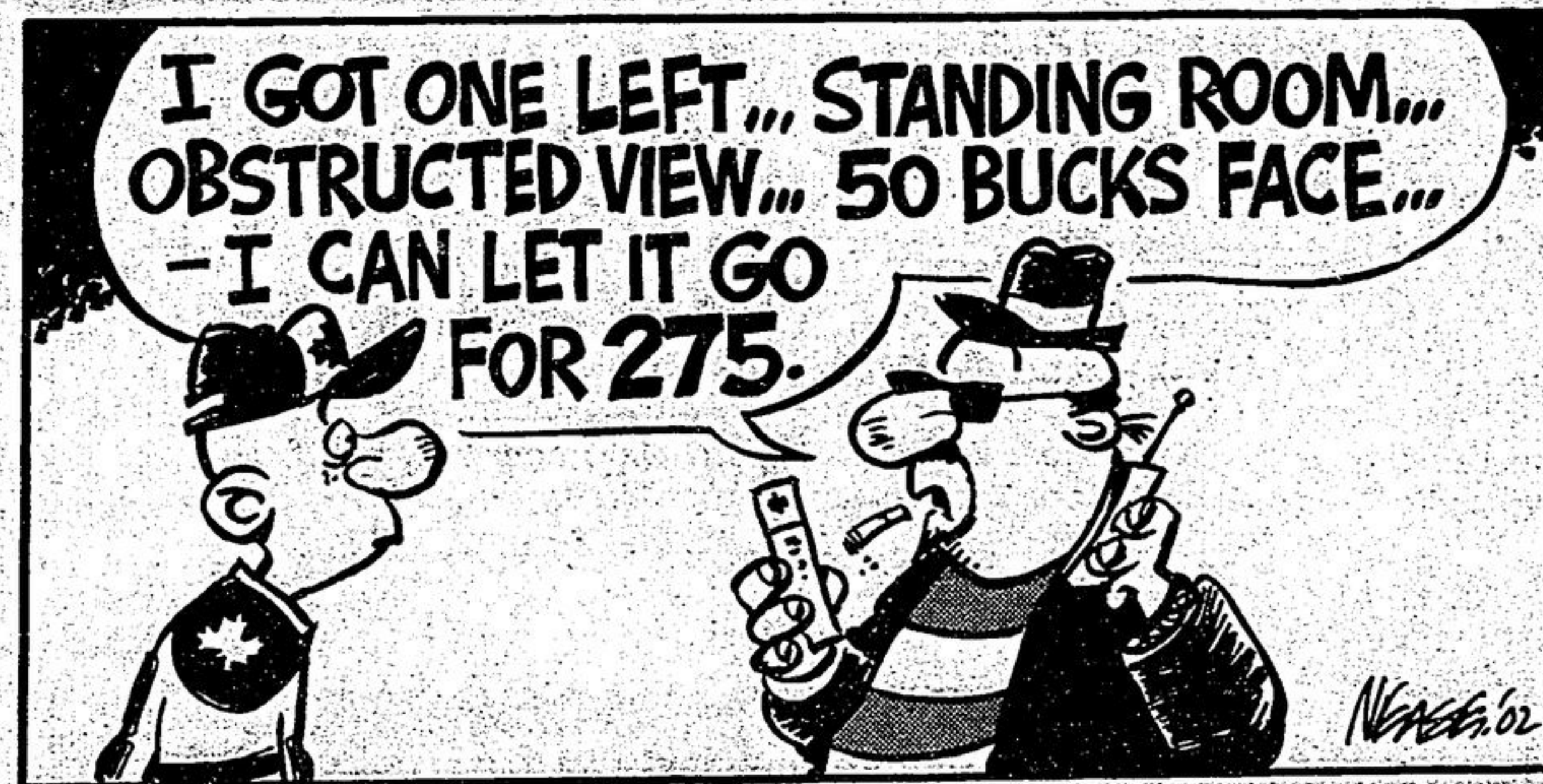
They firmly believe pesticides are dangerous — and there is a growing body of evidence linking pesticides to health problems.

A study by the Ontario College of Family Physicians found pesticides posed an undeniable risk to Canadian children.

Evidence more and more people are choosing not to take the risk these chemicals pose to us and our ecosystems is seen in Loblaws recent announcement it will no longer sell products containing pesticides by 2003.

People have realized the obsession for the perfect lawn, in the big scheme of things, is meaningless. A few dandelions on the lawn may not be so bad after all.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Growing body of evidence suggests pesticide use harmful

Re: Councillor wants 'truth' told about pesticides, *Economist & Sun*, May 2.

The truth is that herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, collectively known as pesticides, often used to kill dandelions and crabgrass, can harm the environment and human health, too.

Pesticides don't stay on your lawns and gardens. When it rains, they are washed off and can end up in groundwater, rivers and in Lake Ontario — our drinking water source.

Last spring, the House of Commons environment and sustainable development committee recommended a freeze on non-essential pesticides, naming water pollution as an important issue.

A year of testimony convinced the committee pesticides harm the environment and wildlife and threaten our health, particularly that of our children and pets.

Toronto Public Health released a report called *Lawn and Garden Pesticides: A Review of Human Exposure and Health Effects Research*. The report focuses on research into the health effects of the seven most commonly used lawn and garden pesticides in Canada.

These include herbicides, 2,4-D, mecoprop, dicamba and 4-chloro-2-methylphenoxyacetic acid (MCPA) and insecticides diazinon, carbaryl and malathion.

In recent years, scientists have observed association between pesticide exposures and adverse effects on reproductive and neuro-

logical health and cancer.

While not all studies show consistent results, a growing body of research suggests even low levels of pesticides can have a negative effect.

People can be exposed to pesticides from many sources: trace levels in food, indoor pesticide use and many kinds of outdoor pesticide use.

Because pesticide exposure comes from so many sources, researchers have not been able to conduct a perfectly controlled scientific study on how lawn care pesticides may affect people's health.

However, in the United States, biomonitoring studies document a widespread presence of pesticide breakdown products in people's urine.

Councillor Stan Daurio should conduct more research. The truth and consequences of pesticide use should not be determined by attending one workshop, nor in the claims of industries that produce and sell pesticides for profit. Pesticide use should be phased out in our communities.

There are many harmless alternatives to pesticides, including some you can make cheaply and easily at home.

For more information about pesticide use and human health read the previously mentioned Toronto Public Health report. It's available at www.city.toronto.on.ca/health.

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Dave Teetzel

I'm not risking my neck when I see my chiropractor

I've been getting "the look" a lot lately; the one that says, "Are ya nuts?" It happens when I say I'm going to a chiropractic appointment.

It all stems from the highly publicized coroner's inquest into the 1996 stroke death of Lana Dale Lewis.

Pathologist Dr. John Deck has testified he's 90-per-cent certain Mrs. Lewis' stroke was caused by a chiropractic adjustment to her neck.

In case you're wondering, my chiropractor adjusts my neck.

I am not a risk taker. If I thought there was a significant chance of suffering a stroke, I would not be visiting a chiropractor. So what are my odds?

My chiropractor gave me an article that suggests a range of probabilities.

One research paper puts the risk of fatal stroke due to chiropractic manipulation at 0.00025 per cent. Danish researchers estimate it at one stroke for every 1.3 million neck adjustments. Another author surveyed 5 million neck adjustments from 1965 to 1980 and found none of them resulted in a stroke.

But those figures are supplied by chiropractors. There are other studies linking chiropractic and stroke.

A recent study found patients admitted to Ontario hospitals with a rare form of stroke that occurs in the vertebral blood vessels were five times more likely to have seen a chiropractor within a week of their stroke.

Deanna M. Rothwell looked at patient records in Ontario hospitals between 1993 and 1998 and then checked insurance billing records to see who had used chiropractic services.

She discovered nine of 582 people who had suffered this form of stroke had visited a chiropractor a week or less earlier. Dr. Rothwell says this is statistically significant.

But she admits she has no idea if any of these patients had neck manipulation done, only that they visited a chiropractor.

Hey, come to think of it, every medical problem I have had in the past 10 years occurred within seven days of having an adjustment. And I would be willing to bet this is true of every single person who visits a chiropractor weekly.

The death at the centre of the current inquest occurred 17 days after Mrs. Lewis visited her chiropractor.

I'm no medical expert and I'm not out to prejudice this inquest.

I'm a journalist, trained to report my observations. In nearly 10 years of regular neck adjustments, I have experienced only positive effects. Because of my profession, I also know it's possible to hype up an alarming bit of news to the point where people become unnecessarily frightened.

It would be a shame if someone who could benefit from chiropractic treatment were scared away from even investigating it by one sensational case.

LETTERS POLICY

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