

Newsletter

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Government and Research Studies on Chiropractic

In recent years, numerous independent researchers and various government agencies have conducted studies which focus on the efficacy, appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of chiropractic treatment. Several of these important studies are listed below.

U.S. Government Agency Report

Research (AHCPR) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services endorses spinal manipulation for acute low back pain in adults in its Clinical Practice Guidelines #14. An independent multidisciplinary panel of private-sector clinicians and other experts convened and developed specific statements on appropriate health care of acute low back problems in adults. One statement cited, relief of discomfort (low back pain) can be accomplished most safely with spinal manipulation and/or nonprescription medication.

The Manga Report

A major study to assess the most appropriate use of available health care resources was reported in 1993. This was an outcomes study funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and conducted in hopes of sharing information about ways to reduce the incidence of work related injuries and to address cost-effective ways to rehabilitate disabled and injured workers. The study was conducted by three health economists led by University of Ottawa Professor Pran Manga, Ph.D. The report of the study is commonly called the Manga Report. The Manga Report overwhelmingly supported the efficacy, safety, scientific validity and cost-effectiveness of chiropractic for low-back pain. Additionally, it found that higher patient satisfaction levels were associated with chiropractic care than with medical treatment alternatives. "Evidence from Canada and other countries suggests potential savings of hundreds of millions annually," the Manga Report states. "The literature clearly and consistently shows that the major savings from chiropractic management come from fewer and lower costs of auxiliary services, fewer hospitalizations and a highly significant reduction in chronic problems as well as in levels and duration of disability."

Rand Study on Low-Back Pain

A four-phase study conducted in the early 1990's by RAND, one of America's most prestigious centers for research in public policy, science and technology, explored many indications of low-back pain.

In the **RAND** studies, an expert panel of researchers including medical doctors and doctors of chiropractic found that:

- Chiropractors deliver a substantial amount of health care to the U.S. population.
- Spinal manipulation is of benefit to some patients with acute low-back pain.

The RAND reports marked the first time that representatives of the medical community went on record stating that spinal manipulation is an appropriate treatment for certain low-back pain conditions.

The New Zealand Commission Report

A particularly significant study of chiropractic was conducted between 1978-1980 by the New Zealand Commission of Inquiry. In its 377-page report to the House of Representatives, the Commission called

its study "probably the most comprehensive and detailed independent examination of chiropractic ever undertaken in any country." The Commission entered the inquiry with "the general impression...shared by many in the community: that chiropractic was an unscientific cult, not to be compared with orthodox medical or paramedical services." By the end of the inquiry, the commission reported itself "irresistibly and with complete unanimity drawn to the conclusion that modern chiropractic is a soundly-based and valuable branch of health care in a specialized area..." Conclusions of the Commission's report, based on investigations in New Zealand, the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, stated:

- Spinal manual therapy in the hands of a registered chiropractor is safe.
- Spinal manual therapy can be effective in relieving musculo-skeletal symptoms such as back pain and other symptoms known to respond to such therapy, such as migraine.
- Chiropractors are the only health practitioners who are necessarily equipped by their education and training to carry out spinal manual therapy.
- In the public interest and in the interests of patients, there must be no impediment to full professional cooperation between chiropractors and medical practitioners.

Florida Workers' Compensation Study

A 1998 study of 10,652 Florida workers' compensation cases was conducted by Steve Wolk, PhD., and reported by the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research. It was concluded that "a claimant with a back related injury, when initially treated by a chiropractor versus a medical doctor, is less likely to become temporarily disabled, or if disabled, remains disabled for a shorter period of time; and claimants treated by medical doctors were hospitalized at a much higher rate than claimants treated by chiropractors."

Washington HMO Study

In 1989, a survey administered by Daniel C. Cherkin, PhD., and Frederick A. MacCornack, Ph.D., concluded that patients receiving care from health maintenance organizations (HMOs) within the state of Washington were three times likely to report satisfaction with care from chiropractors as they were with care from other physicians. The patients were also more likely to believe that their chiropractor was concerned about them.

Utah Workers' Compensation Study

A workers' compensation study conducted in Utah by Kelly B. Jarvis, D.C., Reed B. Phillips, D.C., PhD., and Elliot K. Morris, JD, MBA, compared the cost of chiropractic care to the costs of medical care for conditions with identical diagnostic codes. Results were reported in the August 1991 Journal of Occupational Medicine. The study indicated that costs were significantly higher for medical claims than for chiropractic claims; in addition, the number of work days lost was nearly ten times higher for those who received medical care instead chiropractic care.

Patient Disability Comparison

A 1992 article in the Journal of Family Practice reported a study by D.C. Cherkin, Ph.D., which compared patients of family physicians and of chiropractors. The article stated "the number of days of disability for patients seen by family physicians was significantly higher (mean 39.7) than for patients managed by chiropractors (mean 10.8)." A related editorial in the same issue referred to risks of complications from lumbar manipulation as being "very low."

Oregon Workers' Compensation Study

A 1991 report on a workers' compensation study conducted in Oregon by Joanne Nyiendo, PhD., concluded that the median time loss days (per case) for comparable injuries was 9.0 for patients receiving treatment by a doctor of chiropractic and 11.5 for treatment by a medical doctor.

Stano Cost Comparison Study

A study by Miron Stano, PhD., reported in the June 1993 Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics involved 395,641 patients with neuromusculoskeletal conditions. Results over a two-year period showed that patients who received chiropractic care incurred significantly lower health care costs than did patients treated solely by medical or osteopathic physicians.

Saskatchewan Clinical Research

Following a 1993 study, researchers J. David Cassidy, DC., Haymo Thiel, D.C., M.S., and W. Kirkaldy-Willis, M.D., of the Back Pain Clinic at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatchewan concluded that "the treatment of lumbar intervertebral disk herniation by side posture manipulation is both safe and effective."

Wight Study on Recurring Headaches

A 1978 study conducted by J.S. Wight, D.C., and reported in the ACA Journal of Chiropractic, indicated that 74.6% of patients with recurring headaches, including migraines, were either cured or experienced reduced headache symptomatology after receiving chiropractic manipulation.

1991 Gallup Poll

A 1991 demographic poll conducted by the Gallup Organization revealed that 90% of chiropractic patients felt their treatment was effective; more than 80% were satisfied with that treatment; and nearly 75% felt most of their expectations had been met during their chiropractic visits.

1990 British Medical Journal Report

A study conducted by T.W. Meade, a medical doctor and reported in the June 2, 1990, British Medical Journal concluded after two years of patient monitoring, "for patients with low-back pain in whom manipulation is not contraindicated, chiropractic almost certainly confers worthwhile, long-term benefit in comparison with hospital outpatient management."

Virginia Comparative Study

A 1992 study conducted by L.G. Schiffrin, Ph.D., provided an economic assessment of mandated health insurance coverage for chiropractic treatment within the Commonwealth of Virginia. As reported by the College of William and Mary and the Medical College of Virginia, the study indicated that chiropractic provides therapeutic benefits at economical costs. The report also recommended that chiropractic be a widely available form of health care.

1992 America Health Policy Report

A 1992 review of data from over 2,000,000 users of chiropractic care in the U.S., reported in the Journal of American Health Policy, stated that "chiropractic users tend to have substantially lower total health care costs," and "chiropractic care reduces the use of both physician and hospital care."

1985 University of Saskatchewan Study

In 1985 the University of Saskatchewan conducted a study of 283 patients "who had not responded to previous conservative or operative treatment" and who were initially classified as totally disabled. The study revealed that "81% became symptom free or achieved a state of mild intermittent pain with no work restrictions" after daily spinal manipulations were administered.