

# **TALKING POINTS**

## **Chiropractic Physicians: A Low Cost Solution to High Cost Healthcare**

Numerous studies have shown that services delivered by doctors of chiropractic (DC) are cost effective and safe. The following are excerpts from several of these studies. By examining the research which demonstrates the cost savings associated with the services delivered by doctors of chiropractic, you will find that these services offer tremendous potential in meeting today's health care challenges. The results suggest that insurance companies that restrict access to doctors of chiropractic may, inadvertently, be paying more for care than if they removed these restrictions.

- ✓ A 2012 study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that patients with acute and subacute neck pain found spinal manipulation therapy provided by DCs more effective than medication in both the short and long term.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ A 2010 study evaluating data from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee found that risk-adjusted costs for low back pain episodes of care initiated with a DC were 20 percent less costly than episodes initiated through a medical doctor.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ A 2010 study at the University of British Columbia found that guidelines-based care which included spinal manipulation provided by a DC was significantly more effective than "usual care" provided by medical physicians for patients with lower back pain of less than 16 weeks duration.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ A 2009 Milstein and Choudhry report stated "...when considering effectiveness and cost together, chiropractic physician care for low back and neck pain is *highly cost effective*, [and] represents a good value in comparison to medical physician care..."<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ A study published in 2004 showed that patients enrolled in an HMO network using DC's as primary care physicians experienced significantly fewer hospital visits, spent less time in a hospital for care, underwent fewer surgeries and used far fewer pharmaceuticals than other HMO patients who received traditional medical care.<sup>5</sup> These findings were confirmed in a 2007 follow up study.<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ A 2004 study published in the *British Medical Journal* concluded that spinal manipulation would be "a cost-effective addition to 'best care' for back pain in general practice."<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ According to a 2004 article in the *Spine Journal*, spinal manipulative treatment for both chronic and acute lower back pain was more effective in providing short-term relief than many other types of care, including prescription drugs, physical therapy and home exercise.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bronfort G, Evans R, Anderson A, et.al. Spinal Manipulation, Medication, or Home Exercise With Advice for Acute and Subacute Neck Pain. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Cost of Care for Common Back Pain Conditions Initiated With Chiropractic Doctor vs. Medical Doctor/Doctor of Osteopathy as First Physician: Experience of One Tennessee-Based General Health Insurer," *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics (JMPT)*, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop PB, Quon JA, Fisher CG, Dvorak MF. The Chiropractic Hospital-based Interventions Research Outcomes study: a randomized controlled trial on the effectiveness of clinical practice guidelines in the medical and chiropractic management of patients with acute mechanical low back pain. *Spine Journal*, 2010

<sup>4</sup> Choudhry N, Milstein A. Do chiropractic physician services for treatment of low-back and neck pain improve the value of health benefit plans? An evidence-based assessment of incremental impact on population health and total healthcare spending. San Francisco: Mercer Health and Benefits; 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Sarnat, R.; Winterstein, J. Clinical and Cost Outcomes of an Integrative Medicine IPA. *JMPT*, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Sarnat, R.; Winterstein, J; Cambron JA. Clinical and Cost Outcomes of an Integrative Medicine IPA; an additional 3-year update. *JMPT*, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> UK BEAM Trial Team. United Kingdom back pain exercise and manipulation (UK BEAM) randomized trial: cost-effectiveness of physical treatments for back pain in primary care. *BMJ Online First*, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Bronfort G, Haas M, Evans R, Bouter L. Efficacy of Spinal Manipulation and Mobilization for Low Back Pain and Neck Pain: A Systematic Review and Best Evidence Synthesis. *Spine Journal*, 2004