



Fact Sheet

New publication in Chiropractic & Manual Therapies

Cost of chiropractic versus medical management of adults with spine-related musculoskeletal pain: a systematic review

Background: The cost of spine-related pain in the United States is estimated at **\$134.5 billion**. Spinal pain patients have multiple options when choosing healthcare providers, resulting in variable costs. **Escalation of costs occurs when downstream costs are added to episode costs of care.** The purpose of this review was to compare costs of chiropractic and medical management of patients with spine-related pain.

Results: The literature search found 2,256 citations, of which 93 full-text articles were screened for eligibility. **Forty-four studies were included in the review**, including 26 cohort studies, 17 cost studies, and 1 randomized controlled trial. All included studies were rated as high or acceptable quality. **Patients with spinal pain who consulted chiropractors as first providers needed fewer** opioid prescriptions, surgeries, hospitalizations, emergency department visits, specialist referrals and injection procedures.

Conclusion: Patients with spine-related musculoskeletal pain **who consulted a chiropractor as their initial provider incurred substantially decreased fewer downstream healthcare services and associated costs**, resulting in lower overall healthcare costs **compared with medical management**. The included studies were limited to mostly retrospective cohorts of large databases. Given the consistency of outcomes reported, further investigation with higher-level designs is warranted.

“Patients with spine-related musculoskeletal pain who consulted a chiropractor as their initial provider incurred substantially decreased downstream healthcare services and associated costs, resulting in lower overall healthcare cost compared with medical management.”

Farabaugh R, Hawk C, Taylor D, Daniels C, Noll C, Schneider M, McGowan J, Whalen W, Wilcox R, Sarnat R, Suiter L, Whedon J. Cost of chiropractic versus medical management of adults with spine-related musculoskeletal pain: a systematic review. *Chiropr Man Therap.* 2024 Mar 6;32(1):8.