



Chiropractic Patients Less Likely to Undergo Lumbar Surgery

January 31, 2013 — A recent study in the medical journal *Spine* found a strong association between chiropractic care and the avoidance of lumbar spine surgery. The American Chiropractic Association is encouraged by this and other recent research supporting chiropractic's conservative, less costly approach to low-back pain.

- Key findings of the *Spine* study, published in the Dec. 12, 2012 issue, show that:
- Patients under age 35, women, Hispanics and patients whose first provider was a chiropractic physician had reduced odds of lumbar spine surgery
- Approximately 43 percent of patients who saw a surgeon first had surgery
- Only 1.5 percent of those who saw a chiropractic physician first ended up having surgery

Two additional studies reinforce ACA's longstanding position that healthcare providers should start with conservative approaches to treatment, such as the services provided by doctors of chiropractic, before guiding their patients to less conservative alternatives. Such an approach benefits patients and cuts health care spending—especially for a condition as common as low-back pain.

A recent study in *Medical Care* found that adjusted annual medical costs among complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) users was \$424 lower for spine-related costs, and \$796 lower for total healthcare cost than among non-CAM users. Furthermore, CAM treatments were cost neutral to healthcare systems, meaning that CAM users did not add to the overall medical spending in a nationally representative sample of patients with neck and back problems.

Published in *The Lancet*, "The Global Burden of Disease 2010," authored by an international group of experts assessing the world's biggest health challenges, underscores the need for better solutions to back pain and other musculoskeletal conditions. The massive survey indicates that while people may be living longer they are doing so more frequently with disability.

The study identifies musculoskeletal conditions as the second leading cause of disability, and cites low-back pain as one of the major contributors to disability worldwide. GBD authors

noted that creating effective and affordable strategies to deal with the rising burden of non-fatal health outcomes should be an urgent priority for healthcare providers around the world.

"As governments and health systems around the globe search for answers to complicated health challenges such as rising numbers of chronically ill and disabled patients and runaway costs, research is finally demonstrating what the chiropractic profession has promoted for years: that caring for patients with conservative treatments first, before moving on to less conservative options or unnecessary drugs and surgery, is a sensible and cost-effective strategy," said ACA President Keith Overland, DC.

Source: American Chiropractic Association, acatoday.org

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