

Manga Report

The Ontario Ministry of Health commissioned a study analyzing the scientific literature on low back pain. Chiropractic was the most cost-effective and efficacious care for low back pain and that the management of low back pain should be moved from medical doctors to chiropractor doctors. Pran Manga & Associates 1993- University of Ottawa, Canada

As the largest existing analysis of scientific literature on low back pain, the 1993 Ontario Ministry of Health commissioned study drew international attention when it recommended the management of low back pain be moved from medical doctors to chiropractic doctors.

Due to serious financial problems with the Canadian governments, the different types of treatments for low back conditions were evaluated in an effort to reduce and contain health care costs. Their findings showed chiropractic manipulation was the most cost effective and efficacious care for low back pain.

The researchers also stated that studies on the prevalence and incidence of low back pain suggest that it is the leading cause of disability and morbidity in middle-aged persons, and is by far the most expensive source of workers' compensation costs North America.

The Canadian Government report concluded with the following findings:

- On the evidence, particularly the most scientifically valid clinical studies, spinal manipulation applied by chiropractors is shown to be more effective than alternative treatments for low back pain. Many medical therapies are of questionable validity or are clearly inadequate;
- There is no clinical or case-control study that demonstrates or even implies that chiropractic spinal manipulation is unsafe in the treatment of low back pain. Some medical treatments are equally safe, but others are unsafe and generate iatrogenic (doctor-induced) complications for low back pain patients. Our reading of the literature suggests that chiropractic manipulation is safer than medical management of low back pain;
- Indeed, several existing medical therapies of low back pain are generally contraindicated on the basis of the existing clinical trials. There is also some evidence in the literature to suggest that spinal manipulations are less safe and less effective when performed by nonchiropractic professionals;
- There is an overwhelming body of evidence indicating that chiropractic management of low back pain is more cost-effective than medical management;
- There would be highly significant cost savings if more management of low back pain was transferred from physicians to chiropractors. Evidence from Canada and other countries suggests potential savings of many hundreds of millions annually;

- Workers' compensation studies report that injured workers with the same specific diagnosis of low back pain returned to work much sooner when treated by chiropractors than by medical physicians;
- There is good empirical evidence that patients are very satisfied with chiropractic management of low back pain and considerably less satisfied with medical physician management;
- The use of chiropractic has grown steadily over the years and chiropractors are now accepted as a legitimate healing profession by the public and an increasing number of medical physicians;
- In our view, the following offers an overwhelming case in favor of much greater use of chiropractic services in the management of low back pain:
 - the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of chiropractic management of low back pain
 - the untested, questionable or harmful nature of many current medical therapies
 - the economic efficiency of chiropractic care for low back pain compared with medical care
 - the safety of chiropractic care
 - the higher satisfaction levels expressed by patients of chiropractors.

The following recommendations were also included in the report:

- There should be a shift in policy to encourage and prefer chiropractic services for most patients with low back pain;
- Chiropractic services should be fully insured under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan;
- Chiropractic services should be fully integrated into the health care system;
- Chiropractors should be employed by tertiary hospitals in Ontario;
- Hospital privileges should be extended to all chiropractors for the purposes of treatment of their own patients who have been hospitalized for other reasons, and for access to diagnostic facilities relevant to their scope of practice and patients' needs;
- Chiropractic should have access to all pertinent patient records and tests from hospitals, physicians, and other health care professionals upon the consent of their patients;
- Since low back pain is of such significant concern to workers' compensation, chiropractors should be engaged at a senior level by Workers' Compensation Board to assess policy, procedures and treatment of workers with low back injuries;
- A very good case can be made for making chiropractors the gatekeepers for management of low back pain in the workers' compensation system in Ontario;
- The government should make the requisite research funds and resources available for further clinical evaluations of chiropractic management of low back pain, and for further socioeconomic and policy research concerning the management of low back pain generally;
- Chiropractic education in Ontario should be in the multidisciplinary atmosphere of a university with appropriate public funding;
- Finally, the government should take all reasonable steps to actively encourage cooperation between providers, particularly the chiropractic, medical and physiotherapy professions.