

Update 12

NEW STUDY SUGGESTS CHIROPRACTIC CARE REDUCES OVERALL HEALTH CARE EXPENDITURES

An important study has just been published (October, 2004) in the Archives of Internal Medicine. The study aimed to determine if there was a difference between patients who did, and those who did not, have access to chiropractic care in terms of their consumption of health care resources within a large managed-care system.

The study, sponsored by American Specialty Health (ASH) and conducted by the independent health services research organization Health Benchmarks Inc., compared more than 700 000 health plan members with chiropractic coverage benefit and 1 million members of the same health plan without the chiropractic benefit.

The study found that members with chiropractic insurance coverage, compared with those without coverage, had lower annual total health care expenditures (\$1463 vs \$1671 per member per year). Furthermore, patients with chiropractic coverage, compared with those without coverage, had lower utilization of -

- plain radiographs,
- low back surgery,
- hospitalizations, and
- magnetic resonance imaging.

Patients with chiropractic coverage, compared with those without coverage, also had lower average back pain episode-related costs (\$289 vs \$399).

The authors concluded,

“Access to managed chiropractic care may reduce overall health care expenditures through several effects. Systematic access to managed chiropractic care not only may prove to be clinically beneficial but also may reduce overall health care costs.”

An accompanying editorial in the same edition of the Archives of Internal Medicine states,

“Chiropractic is certainly one of the most popular therapeutic modalities encompassed by complementary and alternative medicine. In the well-known survey by Eisenberg et al, 11% of respondents had used chiropractic in the preceding year. Chiropractors are now recognized as qualified practitioners by a growing number of health insurance companies and receive referrals from a considerable number of physicians practicing in other fields of expertise. Every state recognizes or requires examinations administered by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners before licensing chiropractic professionals and defines continuing education criteria for license renewal. In the apt words used by Meeker and Haldeman, chiropractic is now ‘a profession at the crossroads of mainstream and alternative medicine’.”