

A Pain in the Neck

Research Shows Chiropractic Provides Unique Relief Compared to Other Interventions

Doctor,

This white paper discusses the significance of the 2017 study published in **The Mayo Clinic Proceedings** called *"Influence of Initial Provider on Healthcare Utilization in Patients Seeking Care for Neck Pain"*.

Recent research shows chiropractic is superior to other forms of treatment for neck pain. Chiropractic care proved to have the best outcomes in several categories including the lowest rate of opioid prescriptions, the lowest use of advanced imaging, the lowest referrals for injections, and the lowest rate for surgery. In fact, the number of surgeries needed for those who utilized chiropractic care was zero. Chiropractic is an important whole-body health-improving intervention for those with neck pain. The findings from the study are as follows:

- Neck pain is regarded as a major public health problem.
- There's no consensus regarding the optimal provider to begin after an episode of neck pain care.
- Initial consultation from either a chiropractor or a physical therapist decreases the patient's odds of being prescribed an opioid at 30 days or within any time in the one year follow up period.
- The odds of being prescribed opioids within 14 days was increased if a patient initially consulted with a medical specialist. (by 324%)
- Compared with an initial consultation with a Primary Care Provider (PCP), the odds of receiving an injection in the following year was increased if the initial consult was with a medical specialist. (by 321%)
- The odds of undergoing advanced imaging (MRI or CT) within one year of an initial consult was reduced when the initial provider was a chiropractor and increased when the initial provider was a medical specialist or a physical therapist.
- An initial consult with a non-pharmacological provider, such as a chiropractor or physical therapist, is associated with a decrease in the downstream utilization of healthcare services, and importantly a decrease in opioid use 30 days to one year after the initial consult.
- Recent American College of Physicians Low Back Pain guidelines and the CDC opioid prescription guidelines favor non-pharmacological interventions often provided by DC's and PT's.
- In spite of the current recommendations in favor of frontline non-pharmacological management and patient with neck pain, many systems are not structured to provide care in this manner.
- Stronger alignment with a physical therapist and chiropractor as frontline providers by healthcare systems may be needed considering the widespread addiction, which has been identified as a public health epidemic.
- There is a decrease in odds of opioid prescriptions within 30 days of initial consultation, which persists through one year, suggesting a lasting protective influence of non-pharmacological providers.
- When patients in the sample initially consulted with the chiropractor, the odds of MRI use decreased compared with consulting with a PCP.
- Radiographic studies have been a long-standing mainstay of chiropractic practice, and the use of radiography may have shielded patients from undergoing more advanced imaging such as MRI.
- Initiating care with a medical specialist was associated with an increase in the odds of receiving spinal injections and undergoing MRI and radiography and had the highest percentage of patients undergoing surgery.
- These findings support that initiating care with a Chiropractic provider for a new episode of neck pain present an opportunity to decrease opioid exposure, advanced imaging, and injections.

Many people do not get the opportunity to hear about the benefits which chiropractic can offer due to the marketing and prescribing of pharmaceutical drugs as the standard of care. Chiropractic not only improves neck pain outcomes for those suffering, it is accompanied by a host of added benefits through the scientific application of the adjustment. This study helps to show the benefits of chiropractic for those suffering from neck pain while also highlighting numerous other advantages in several different categories including drug use, number of opioid prescriptions, and rates of surgery.

