

SPINE & SPORTS: Improving spine care outcomes

Tuesday

Posted Feb 14, 2017 at 4:43 PM

Updated Feb 14, 2017 at 5:09 PM

By Scott F. Gillman / Daily News Correspondent

A recent study of older back pain patients concluded that individuals with both chronic lower back pain along with multiple other health conditions had lower health care costs and better outcomes when they used chiropractic treatment compared to those who did not. The study contributes to the evidence that doctors of chiropractic (DCs) should have an expanded role in the overall care of all patients with back pain.

The causes of back pain can be puzzling, as a multitude of diagnostic possibilities and a kaleidoscope of treatment approaches are available. Yet even more confounding is that regardless of discipline, providers often fail to utilize the available evidence-based approaches to treat the problem. Despite this, back pain sufferers should not be limited to just a few care options, but should have access to the wide variety of existing and viable treatments.

Back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and musculoskeletal disease and pain account for substantial medical costs, with expenditures for imaging, pharmaceuticals and medical/surgical procedures straining our bank accounts as well as the struggling health care system. Many medical approaches for back pain pose significant risk; back surgeries are costly and sometimes fail or render the patient with chronic residual pain, and epidural steroid injection, a procedure routinely used in the treatment of back pain and sciatica, comes with a

slight risk of serious neurologic side effects, while also typically providing only a temporary solution. When one has run out of options, these of procedures must be considered.

Chiropractic is an option that more and more people are turning to. In general, chiropractic care is proven to be very safe, and is statistically the safest mode of healthcare in the world for these reasons: it does not involve pharmaceuticals or surgery, the odds of serious adverse effects from care are minimal, and the odds of death from treatment are essentially non-existent. Studies show that patients generally are very satisfied with chiropractic care, and research continues to demonstrate improved outcomes without adding healthcare costs.

As with any medical treatment, finding doctors of chiropractic with good clinical skills is key. Unlike internal medicine or neurology practitioners, for example, chiropractors have widely varying approaches, methods and ideologies. Also, it can be challenging to find DCs who have rightfully abandoned outdated methodologies such as X-raying spines to look for supposed "misalignment" (an unfounded concept), and who have instead adopted modern and clinically valid practices.

With strong scientific evidence to support the validity and efficacy of chiropractic care, more medical institutions will hopefully involve quality doctors of chiropractic to enhance musculoskeletal care for their patients. If your hospital or medical group doesn't have a doctor of chiropractic on board, ask why!

Scott Gillman is a doctor of chiropractic in Natick, in practice since 1991. He is also a chiropractic sports medicine specialist with a diplomate from the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians. He can be reached at 508-650-1091 or through

.....: