

Interprofessional Spine Care Report

Primary Spine Care

Chiropractic Care Directly Reduces Opioid Consumption

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The diagnosis and management of mechanical spine pain is a critically important aspect of patient care. In a recent paper by Whedon et al, (2018), the authors reported, "Pain relief resulting from services delivered by doctors of chiropractic may allow patients to use lower or less frequent doses of opioids, leading to reduced risk of adverse effects. The objective of this investigation was to evaluate the association between utilization of chiropractic services and the use of prescription opioid medications." [page 3]

The authors outlined the data set they reviewed by stating, "The data source was the all payer claims database administered by the State of New Hampshire. The authors chose New Hampshire because health claims data were readily available for research, and in 2015, New Hampshire

had the second-highest age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths in the United States." [page 3]

The authors continue by stating, "There is little evidence that opioids improve chronic pain, function, or quality of life, and long-term use of opioids, particularly at higher dosages, is associated with overdose, misuse, abuse, and opioid use disorder. Other adverse effects include tolerance, physical dependence, increased sensitivity to pain, constipation, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, sleepiness, dizziness, confusion, depression, anxiety, itching and sweating, and lower sex drive and energy in men due to reduced testosterone levels." [page 4] From an economic and financial standpoint the authors report, "The economic impact of the opioid epidemic was estimated to be nearly \$56 billion in health and social costs in 2007, and since that time the problem has grown considerably. [page 5]

A retrospective claims study of 165,569 adults found that utilization of services delivered by doctors of chiropractic was associated with reduced use of opioids. **More recently, it was reported that the supply of chiropractors as well as spending on spinal manipulative therapy is inversely correlated with opioid prescriptions in younger Medicare beneficiaries. This finding suggests that increased availability and utilization of services delivered by doctors of chiropractic could lead to reductions in opioid prescriptions.** [page 5]

Working with a highly trained doctor of chiropractic is being shown to have a positive effect overall on the health of patients and should be part of spina pain referral and triage, particularly for the mechanical component.

Reference:

1. Whedon, J. M., Toler, A. W., Goehl, J. M., & Kazal, L. A. (2018). Association Between Utilization of Chiropractic Services for Treatment of Low-Back Pain and Use of Prescription Opioids. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.