

Health Care Costs for Back and Neck Problems

In this study, researchers examined the question of whether the use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) increased or decreased overall medical spending for spine care. To answer this question, investigators analyzed responses from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey from 2002-2008, which included a large, national sample of 12,036 health care users with spine problems. Although the definition of CAM included chiropractic, homeopathic, and naturopathic physicians, herbalists, acupuncturists, massage therapists, and other non-traditional medical treatment, 75% of respondents classified as CAM users received chiropractic treatment. Investigators determined the results apply to chiropractic similarly to how they apply for CAM use in general.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Authors found that overall medical spending was not increased by chiropractic use. In fact, mean adjusted annual medical cost for all health care were \$796 lower in general and \$424 lower annually for spine-specific care for respondents receiving chiropractic care vs those who did not. The lower health costs for chiropractic was attributed to lower in-patient costs. There were no differences in out-patient medical expenditures, either for total health care or for spine-specific care.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

This study is arguably the most definitive to date reporting the cost of chiropractic care for people with spine-related conditions. The large, nationally representative sample strengthens the generalizability of study findings. Also, the statistical methods took into consideration the fact that people who visit a chiropractor are usually healthier than those seeking care from other provider types, a factor not often included in other chiropractic cost analysis studies.

For more information, the complete article is online at:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3494804/>

REFERENCE

Martin BI, Gerkovich MM, Deyo RA, Sherman KJ, Cherkin DC, Lind BK, Goertz CM, Lafferty W. **The Association of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use and Health Care Expenditures for Back and Neck Problems.** *Med Care.* 2012 December; 50(12): 1029–1036.

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