



Doctors of Chiropractic: Providers of Conservative, Patient Centered Primary Care and Essential Benefits. Helping to Fill the Workforce Gap and Decrease Health Care Costs:

Over 70,000, doctors of chiropractic (DC), also referred to as chiropractic physicians, practice across the nation, providing care for tens of millions of the US population annually. Doctors of chiropractic are defined as physicians by the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program, Medicare, and the Federal Workers' Compensation program.

Doctors of chiropractic can help to address the looming provider shortage. As physicians who are educated and licensed to diagnose, treat, co-manage conditions and refer to other providers, when necessary, doctors of chiropractic can help America fill the workforce gap. Doctors of chiropractic are well trained in the cost-effective care of common conditions impacting the health of Americans.

- Studies show that low back problems are the most prevalent pain complaint affecting the general population, with **up to 75 percent of Americans experiencing low back pain in their lifetime.**
- The cost of treating spinal pain has made it the sixth most expensive medical condition in America at \$86 billion in 2005--a 65 percent increase since 1997.

Doctors of chiropractic provide unparalleled expertise in the care of neuromuscular and musculoskeletal disorders and their services are a cost-effective care option for these conditions.

- A 2010 study at the University of British Columbia found that **care provided by chiropractic physicians is significantly more effective than "usual care" provided by medical physicians for patients with acute and sub-acute low back pain.**¹
- Further studies have shown that spinal manipulative care for both chronic and acute lower back pain was more effective and provided more short-term relief than many other types of care, including prescription drugs, physical therapy and home exercise.²

Doctors of chiropractic are also trained to provide wellness and prevention services. There is no dispute that the leading causes of sickness and death in America are chronic diseases that can be prevented or mitigated by adopting a healthier life style. The incidence of conditions such as heart disease, stroke, Type II diabetes, arthritis, and certain cancers can be reduced by eliminating smoking, eating properly, getting regular exercise, managing stress, and partnering with health care providers to take an active role in maintaining a healthy and balanced life style.

A recent survey showed that doctors of chiropractic commonly utilize the following interventions: ergonomic/postural advice, physical fitness/exercise promotion, changing risky/unhealthy behaviors, nutritional/dietary recommendations, relaxation/stress reduction and self-care strategies. Shifting patients from illness/ injury-based model to a wellness model is one of the goals of PPACA and is consistent with foundations of a chiropractic practice. **Chiropractic health care enjoys high patient satisfaction and quality outcomes.**³ The full inclusion of chiropractic services will ensure patient access to services that may lower costs by preventing emergency room visits, preventing the onset of chronic disease by enabling and encouraging healthy lifestyles and shifting health-care expense to less costly interventions.

The services provided by doctors of chiropractic are cost effective.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act strives to shift the focus from very costly illness and injury care to the more cost effective health promotion, prevention and wellness model of care. Chiropractic physicians have an important role to play in this imperative transition. Recent research reveals that utilizing doctors of chiropractic may lead to lower healthcare costs.

- A 2010 study of patients with low back pain who initiated care with a Doctor of Chiropractic resulted; in 40% lower health care costs when compared with care initiated through a medical doctor.⁴
- Another study found that **patients using chiropractic physicians as their primary care providers had significant decreases in hospital admissions (43%), pharmaceutical costs (52%) and outpatient surgeries and procedures (43%).**⁵
- These findings were confirmed in a follow up study of the same population.⁶ A study published in the British Medical Journal found that patients receiving manipulation and exercise had lower relative care costs and experienced more benefits than those treated with general medical care.⁷

DC's are physicians whose services should be fully included in state healthcare delivery systems.

Chiropractic colleges and universities are fully accredited by the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) under the authority of the US Department of Education with the stated mission of educating doctors of chiropractic as primary care providers. As such, doctors of chiropractic should be fully included as physician providers of all minimum Essential Benefit services for which they are educated and licensed to provide under state law. Section 2706 of PPACA on non-discrimination directs this inclusiveness.

Doctors of chiropractic provide physician services: consultation, examination, patient diagnosis and management. Doctors of chiropractic provide the vast majority of spinal adjustments/manipulation services and are well trained in providing Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) services. Doctors of chiropractic order and interpret diagnostic imaging, laboratory and other testing.⁸

Doctors of chiropractic establish clinical care plans and offer conservative care options for patient management. Doctors of chiropractic co-manage patients of all ages with other providers and refer as needed. These varied services clearly fall within multiple categories of the minimum Essential Benefits delineated in the PPACA statute.

Patients must be given a real choice of recognized health care providers, to the full extent of state licensure. **True competition and a level playing field are necessary to improve the quality of health care delivery and lower costs.** Using conservatively-focused chiropractic physicians as fully as possible is a sensible and logical way to encourage the use of more conservative and less costly testing and treatment interventions where appropriate.

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