

Less Medicine, More Surgery

Editorial Staff

The conventional paradigm for treating neck and back problems is medical treatment (usually drugs), and/or surgery. A recent study found a sharp decrease in medical treatment, but an alarming increase in surgery:

Hospital Admissions (per 100,000 adults) for Medically Treated and Surgically Treated Neck and Back Problems

Medical Treatment	1982	1987	1992
Ontario	242.8	180.2	117.1
U.S.	586.3	383.6	143.7

Surgically Treated

Ontario	72.1	72.4	82.3
U.S.	160.5	194.1	217.2

The researchers suggest that "higher admission rates for surgery in the U.S. may reflect a larger supply of surgical specialists and imaging units."

----- SOURCE: Lavis JN, Anderson GM, Taylor VM, Deyo RA, Bombardier C, Axcell T, Kreuter W. Trends in hospital use for mechanical neck and back problems in Ontario and the United States: discretionary care in different health care systems. Can Med Assoc J 1998;158:29-36.

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