

New Study is Promising for Chiropractic Geriatrics

PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF "CONSIDERABLE INTEREST TO CHIROPRACTIC PROVIDERS"

Editorial Staff

A recent study published in *Topics in Clinical Chiropractic*¹ of randomized clinical trial data found chiropractic geriatric patients "less likely to have been hospitalized, less likely to have used a nursing home, more likely to report a better health status, more likely to exercise vigorously, and more likely to be mobile in the community." While this information is open to interpretation, it does begin to address the wellness benefits that DCs have long asserted their care offers to patients, especially elderly ones. As the authors of the study concluded, "Although the number of chiropractic patients is low (n=23), and caution must be exercised in interpreting the data, the preliminary results are of considerable interest to chiropractic providers ..."

While the geriatric population studied comprised 414 patients, of which only 5.65 percent were chiropractic patients, there were some very marked differences in health-related behaviors and characteristics between geriatric patients who received chiropractic care, and those who did not. The study discovered that chiropractic geriatric patients get more exercise and do more strenuous exercise, tend to be more mobile, and use more community services. Geriatric patients under chiropractic care were more likely to report their own health as being good to excellent, reported less arthritis, depression, and hospitalization, as well as fewer chronic conditions.

Health Related Behaviors (as reported by the seniors)	Chiropractic	No Chiropractic
Regular Exercise	73.9%	61.6%
Strenuous Exercise	57.1%	31.2%
Current Smoker	13.0%	7.4%
Any Alcohol Consumption	43.5%	41.9%
Mobil More than 5 Days/Week	73.9%	52.7%

Health Related Characteristics (as reported by the seniors)	Chiropractic	No Chiropractic
Good to Excellent Health	87.0%	67.8%
More than 2 Chronic Conditions	47.8%	62.9%
Arthritis	43.5%	65.7%
Falls in Past Month	47.8%	41.3%
Pain in Past Month	72.7%	69.0%
Depression	13.0%	19.4%
Visit Physician in Past Month	60.9%	61.4%
Use Community Services in Past 3 Months	69.6%	46.8%

Nursing Home Use in Past 3 Years	4.3%	19.2%
Hospitalization in Past 3 Months	4.4%	2.1%
Hospitalization in Past 3 Years	26.1%	47.6%

The study prompts the question: Do healthy people utilize chiropractic care as part of a health-oriented regimen, or does chiropractic care create healthy people? And while this (perhaps academic) question will have to be answered by continued research, certain correlations are evident between chiropractic care and the health of those elderly patients studied.

Research in the area of chiropractic geriatrics is not only lacking, but desperately needed. Health care professionals during the remainder of the '90s and during the next decade will have to address the needs of a graying America. In response to these needs, medicine and other health disciplines have been increasing their study of aging and senior health care requirements. Geriatric care provides the chiropractic profession one of the best opportunities to examine wellness, preventative care, and quality of life issues that we have been espousing for so many years.

The chiropractic profession must be involved in more studies like this one to assess our role in caring for the burgeoning numbers of senior Americans.

To obtain a copy of the article reporting the study, contact *Topics in Clinical Chiropractic*:

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Tele. 1-800-234-1660

Reference

1. Coulter ID, Hurwitz EL, Aronow HU, Cassata DM, Beck JC. Chiropractic patients in a comprehensive home-based geriatric assessment, follow-up and health promotion program. *Top Clin Chiro* 1996; 3(2): 46-55.

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