

## Patient Satisfaction Study Yields Positive Results

In an effort to further solidify chiropractic's credibility, the importance of patient satisfaction cannot be over emphasized. Not only is patient satisfaction a critical measure of chiropractic's effectiveness, but it also reinforces chiropractic's position as a significant contributor to public health.

A study just released by the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research (FCER) reveals that patients are very satisfied with the care they receive from their chiropractors. Research Dimensions, Inc. (RDI), a Richmond, Virginia-based firm, completed the study in December 1994. The study explores the satisfaction levels of chiropractic patients in rural, medically underserved areas of the United States. The study, which was generously funded by the National Chiropractic Mutual Insurance Company (NCMIC), was a follow-up to an earlier FCER study that established that the majority of chiropractors practicing in rural, medically underserved areas provide primary health care services to their patients. The findings of both of these studies are particularly important because they target areas where the chiropractor is the only available health care provider.

To collect data for its patient satisfaction study, RDI contacted the 260 chiropractors who had participated in the earlier FCER study. Each chiropractor was asked to randomly distribute surveys to 10 patients. The patient response rate was overwhelming, with more than 1,000 completed surveys returned to RDI.

Major findings of the RDI study are:

- 99 percent of the respondents indicated that they were either confident or very confident that their chiropractor had diagnosed their problem correctly;
- 99 percent of the respondents indicated they were satisfied, or very satisfied with the chiropractic treatment they received;
- 93 percent responded that their physical problem or condition had improved as a result of chiropractic care;
- 93 percent of those responding said that chiropractic care contributes to a healthier, more fit lifestyle;
- 71 percent of those responding indicated that they were taking less medication as a result of chiropractic care.

Additionally, more than half of the respondents stated that they had been chiropractic patients for more than five years. This statistic is significant because the longevity of care is considered an excellent indicator of patient satisfaction.

Patients were also queried about their perception of the chiropractors' thoroughness in explaining the source of their problem, their satisfaction with the treatment plan outlined by the chiropractor, and the attentiveness with which their chiropractor monitored their problem. In each instance, the vast majority of patients registered satisfaction with their chiropractor.

When asked what they like most about their chiropractic treatment most patients responded that they feel good after a treatment, that treatment affords them immediate relief from pain, and that they do not have to take medication.

The RDI study also substantiated findings from the earlier FCER study. For example, many patients responded that they see their chiropractor for problems other than low back pain. In the first study, many doctors indicated that they treat conditions beyond those of musculoskeletal origin. Additionally, a majority of patients indicated that their chiropractor advises them on nutrition, exercise, stress management, and general health problems. Furthermore, all of the chiropractors who participated in the FCER study noted that they offer wellness counseling to their patients.

The chiropractic profession should be pleased with the results of these studies. Not only do they emphasize the scope of services chiropractors deliver to their patients, but the high degree of satisfaction with which patients regard these services.

Copies of both *The Chiropractic Patient in Rural Health Professional Shortage Areas of the U.S.*, and *The Chiropractor as a Primary Health Care Provider in Rural, Health Professional Shortage Areas of the U.S.* are available through FCER: Tele: 1-800-622-6309.

Deborah Callahan, MA FCER director of Education and Information Resources Arlington, Virginia

JANUARY 1995