

## AARP: The Magazine Forgets About Chiropractic

TWO ARTICLES ON PAIN MANAGEMENT DISCUSS OTHER OPTIONS

Editorial Staff

According to the latest figures from the National Institutes of Health, one in six Americans currently lives with chronic pain; the vast majority are age 50 or older. Fifty also happens to be the minimum age for a person to be eligible to join the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), an organization with more than 35 million active members in the U.S.

One of the benefits of AARP membership is a subscription to *AARP: The Magazine*. In the September-October issue of the magazine, a featured article, "Rooting Out Pain" by Elizabeth Enright, sheds light on a variety of new treatments used to help ease the chronic pain suffered by millions of Americans. Readers of the article will be surprised to learn which methods Enright discusses in detail - and which ones she omits entirely.

The article begins with the tale of 56-year-old Dorothy Koss-Fillinger, who suffered nerve pain in her thighs and buttocks as a result of surgical procedures, radiation and chemotherapy to treat a recurring form of cancer. The treatments left her in such poor shape that she was unable to drive or even stand up for any length of time. As a result, she was prescribed various forms of painkillers, all of which stopped working over time. She visited a pain-management specialist and had a small pump implanted into her stomach that delivered drugs directly into her central nervous system, providing some measure of pain relief. Today, she still can't perform all of the activities she could before being stricken with cancer, and occasionally suffers bouts of intermittent pain, which are relieved by sucking on lollipops laced with fentanyl, a painkiller. "It's as good as it's going to get," she said.

In the article, Ms. Enright interviews a handful of health care providers from across the country - all medical doctors - on the changing attitudes toward pain management, and mentions more than two-dozen different current and newly approved drugs being used for pain relief. She also discusses five types of pain (lower back pain, arthritis pain, whole-body pain disorders, cancer pain and neuropathic pain), and lists various treatments for each type of pain.

According to Ms. Enright, low back pain, for example, can be helped by movement (exercising and increasing your mobility); medicine (such as analgesics and tricyclic antidepressants); vertebroplasty (a technique that can strengthen vertebrae with injections of orthopedic cement); and surgery. Neuropathic pain can be treated with surgery and "double-duty drugs" that quiet electrical stimuli in the body. In fact, pharmaceutical medications in one form or another are recommended for every category of pain, and "medicine" is listed as the only treatment for whole-body disorders such as fibromyalgia.

Nowhere in Ms. Enright's 2,800-plus-word article does she recommend chiropractic or any other complementary and alternative therapy as a legitimate source of pain relief - in fact, chiropractic isn't mentioned at all.

The same issue of *AARP: The Magazine* features a companion article, "Alternative Pain

Treatments," also authored by Ms. Enright. "New drugs are not the only hope for pain sufferers," she writes, listing a half-dozen therapies that are "thought to be most effective" for pain relief, including acupuncture, hydrotherapy, massage therapy, prolotherapy, *tai chi*, and yoga.

However, as was the case in "Rooting Out Pain," there is no mention of chiropractic.

According to the AARP's mission statement, the organization "is dedicated to enhancing quality of life for all as we age. We lead positive social change and deliver value to members through information, advocacy and service." Indeed, AARP members are provided with a wealth of health-related benefits, including discounted visits to more than 25,000 practitioners in the AARP Alternative Health and Wellness Network, which includes acupuncturists, massage therapists, "holistic" physicians - and, of course, chiropractors.

Clearly, the AARP sees the benefit that chiropractors and other health care providers can offer its members. The editors of *AARP: The Magazine*, however, do not appear to be on the same page.

This is a perfect opportunity for the chiropractic profession to send a message to the editors of *AARP: The Magazine* that there are other places to look for pain relief other than a bottle of pills or a hypodermic needle - first and foremost, chiropractic. Let the editors know how you feel by sending your comments to:

Letters

*AARP: The Magazine*

601 "E" Street NW

Washington, DC 20049

You can also e-mail a response to [aarpmagazine@aarp.org](mailto:aarpmagazine@aarp.org).

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