

Study Suggests Chiropractic Reduces Health Care Costs, Need for Surgery

Editorial Staff

Findings from the [Wellmark](#) Blue Cross and Blue Shield 2008 Physical Medicine Pilot on Quality, a one-year pilot program designed to measure patient quality of care, suggest significant clinical outcomes and health care cost reductions attributable to the use of chiropractic and other physical medicine services. Patients who received chiropractic or physical therapy had lower total health care costs and were less likely to have surgery than demographically similar Wellmark members who did not receive such services, and overall, 89 percent of all patients receiving physical medicine services reported improvement of at least 30 percent within 30 days.

The 2008 pilot, an ongoing quality improvement program for Iowa and South Dakota physical medicine providers, analyzed data on care provided by 238 chiropractors, physical therapists and occupational therapists to 5,500 Wellmark members with musculoskeletal disorders. Chiropractors from the [Palmer Clinic](#) were among the chiropractic providers for the pilot, with Palmer clinicians also acting as advisors.

Wellmark utilized [Triad Healthcare](#) to help administer the program and collaborated with Triad to collect data and measure outcomes. Triad also analyzed the chiropractic and physical therapy utilization data for the 2008 pilot and will continue to administer the 2009 program, which is open to participating Wellmark chiropractors, medical/osteopathic physicians, podiatrists, physical therapists and occupational therapists in Iowa and South Dakota.

“Participants in our first pilot on quality are dedicated to pursuing professional development, improving quality health care, and helping their patients live the most productive and pain-free lives possible,” said Pamela A. Duffy, PT, PhD, OCS, Wellmark’s physical medicine director. “Wellmark is very pleased with the clinical outcomes demonstrated by these practitioners, and will continue working with providers to design programs that help evaluate the value of physical medicine services for members.”

Contact Ann Wilson (1-515-245-4922, wilsona@wellmark.com) for further details on the 2008 pilot study; to learn more about how to participate in the 2009 program, contact Wellmark at 1-800-799-0199, option 1.

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