

Keeping Patients Active With Rehab and Exercise Products

DCPI Staff

According to a recent online survey, almost all doctors of chiropractic utilize active rehab and therapeutic exercise products for their patients.¹ This is echoed by the [most recent survey](#) conducted by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners, which found that 96 percent of doctors utilize "corrective or therapeutic exercise procedures" in their clinic.²

Choice

As is true with most products used in chiropractic practice, doctors enjoy having choices. The results suggest that on average, the typical doctor of chiropractic uses active rehab/therapeutic products from more than three different companies. However, not all vendors are equally well known. Of the 12 active rehab companies listed in the survey, half were well-known and half were not. Those companies that were well known were those where a minimum of 75 percent of respondents stated that they were at least "somewhat likely" to purchase from them, based upon what they knew about the companies. Those six companies in the lesser-known camp were those that fell below 50 percent of doctors who were at least "somewhat likely" to purchase from them.

Patient Interaction

Doctors are successful using active rehab/therapeutic exercise products to address a number of patient complaints. The success rate for all complaints listed was at or above 79 percent:

When DCs were asked why they utilize active rehab equipment in their practice, Dr. Jennifer Lukenbill of Columbia, Mo., noted: "I like to treat the whole person. It's just not possible without incorporating active rehab in my treatment plans." This same sentiment was echoed by another DC, who stated, "Chiropractors preach that we treat the whole body. Muscles are part of that body and they all attach to bone somewhere. If you are not doing active rehab, you are only doing half the job."

Practice Benefit

According to respondents, utilizing active rehab/therapeutic exercise products clinically has several benefits to their practice. At the top of the list were better patient outcomes (88 percent agreement) and increased patient satisfaction (82 percent agreement). Approximately half of doctors enjoyed additional benefits, which included increased referrals (54 percent), increased practice income (52 percent) and enhanced reputation within their community (52 percent).

Dr. Kano from California notes that utilizing active rehab products "helps to increase activities of daily living, which gives greater satisfaction to patients. They are more likely to refer in friends and family." In addition to referrals from patients, another respondent remarked, "It has shown better overall outcomes. We have also received many more MD referrals because we just 'don't only do chiropractic.'"

Issues

Less than half of those who completed the survey totally agreed that active rehab/therapeutic product vendor pricing "represents a great value for the money" (30 percent), "is very affordable" (38 percent) and "has excellent customer service" (42 percent). This level of discontent on pricing and customer service is worse than the rating for other product categories that have been studied. Total agreement with product quality (79 percent) and rehab/pain relief philosophy (67 percent) was considerably higher.

Recommendations to Colleagues

An impressive 95 percent of DCs would recommend active rehab/therapeutic exercise products to their colleagues. The primary reason is, "It has been a very effective as part of my treatment strategy" (85 percent). This is confirmed by several doctors. Dr. Cheryl Haugh of Illinois states, "This is half of total therapy. To not do rehab is to send the patient out into the cold without a coat." New Jersey chiropractor Dr. Kenneth Cieslak looks at it this way: "The key to evidence-based practice is to have a logical progression from passive care to active care plans. Anything less is truly a disservice to your patients." Other reasons for recommending active rehab/therapeutic exercise products include:

- Patients enjoy using the products - 47 percent
- Reputation of my practice has increased - 47 percent
- Patients have referred others as a result of using the products - 45 percent

Recommendations to Patients

When asked the percentage of their patients to whom they recommend active rehab/therapeutic exercise products, one out of every three doctors recommend products to almost all of their patients. One in two DCs recommend products to at least three-quarters of their patients, and nearly two-thirds recommend products to at least half of their patients.

Cross-tabulation of the responses revealed that DCs who use products from different companies experience different patterns of recommendation. Not all companies are as effective at providing the necessary materials to support the efforts of doctors to recommend their products to their patients. This data highlights the point that doctors need to look to companies to provide information, education and display materials that will assist in the process of making recommendations to their patients.

The percentage of patients that purchases active rehab/therapeutic exercise products is a function of the percentage of DCs that makes those recommendations. Half of all DCs recommend these products to 75 percent or more of their patients. Of those 50 percent that recommend, two out of five are successful in that at least 75 percent of their patients purchase active rehab equipment from them.

Summary

Active rehab/therapeutic exercise equipment is utilized in almost every chiropractic practice for a multitude of complaints. The primary reason is that they integrate so well as an effective part of the doctor's treatment strategy. As Dr. Clint Freeman of Arkansas states: "They are another tool to help my patients achieve a greater level of health."

While most DCs utilize products from multiple vendors, some vendors provide better support to help inform and educate patients. Doctors will want to not only consider the products offered, but

the materials that will support their recommendations when considering which vendors to work with.

References

1. Nutritional Supplement Survey. MPA Media, completed September 16, 2009.
2. [Practice Analysis of Chiropractic 2010](#). National Board of Chiropractic Examiners. May 2010.