

## A Trend We Cannot Ignore

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It is truly a sad time in our history for American women (and men). A recent statistic from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>1</sup> reveals that over half of all U.S. adult women are currently taking prescription drugs.

According to the survey, 50.4 percent of all women reported taking "at least one prescription drug over the preceding month." Apply this disturbing statistic to your current patient base - that means approximately every other female patient is taking some kind of prescription drug.

While men are somewhat better off, relatively speaking, almost 40 percent (39.9 percent) are taking some kind of prescription drug, according to the survey. Again, extrapolating this statistic to your practice, this means approximately two out of every five of your male patients are on drugs. (An entire column could be devoted to why women use more drugs than men, but that's for another day.) And let's not forget that these drugs are all legal.

The survey only evaluated the percentage of people who take prescription drugs. Needless to say, the percentages would be much higher if we added in the percentage of people who are on some kind of over-the-counter (OTC) drug. (Please keep in mind that the vast majority of OTC drugs were originally introduced as prescription drugs.)

Think about it: Every adjustment, every vitamin, every herb, anything you do for the health of your patients is impacted by the myriad of drugs flowing through their veins; drugs they took last year as well as drugs they took this morning. It raises some interesting questions for you and your practice:

- Do you know what drugs your patients are on?
- Do you understand how those drugs are negatively impacting their health?
- If not, how can you know which of their complaints are health-related and which are the results of drug "side-effects"?
- Is the patient's "health" more impacted by what you're doing or the drugs they're taking?

It would be nice to believe that "our" patients are the exception; that chiropractic patients understand wellness and very rarely take any kind of drug. Is this the reality in your practice?

Take an informal survey of your own patients. Over the next week, ask your patients when they last took a prescription or OTC drug. Ask the questions in a routine manner, so you don't inadvertently influence their answer. You may be shocked by what you hear.

If you really want an education, ask them which drugs they took, what the drugs are for and if they are aware of (or have experienced) any side-effects attributable to the medication(s). You probably will find out that some take multiple drugs for multiple things. Take the time to look up a few of these drugs online and see how much your patients don't know about what they're continually putting into

their bodies.

This trend toward drugs is taking its toll on the health of our patients. It's something we can't ignore.

You need to decide how this trend is impacting the health of your patients. You will want to consider how you can impact your patients' health, even if they insist on taking certain drugs for certain conditions.

This is not a simple issue, but it is one that we cannot ignore. We are still the guiding light of wellness overlooking the stormy sea of a drug-driven health care marketplace. The chiropractic profession is probably the only light most of our patients will ever see.

How we shine that light can impact the health of millions.

### *Reference*

1. QuickStats: percentage\* of persons reporting use of at least one prescription drug during the preceding month, by sex and race/ethnicity - United States, 1999-2002. *MMWR*, Jan. 13, 2006;55(1):15. Available online at [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5501a6.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5501a6.htm).

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