

# Key Facts about the Chiropractic Profession

## By the Numbers

- There are 77,000 Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) in the United States who are required to pass a series of four national board exams<sup>i</sup> and be state licensed.<sup>ii</sup> Roughly another 3,000 DCs work in academic and management roles.
- There are approximately 10,000 chiropractic students<sup>iii</sup> in 18 nationally accredited, chiropractic doctoral graduate education programs<sup>iv</sup> across the United States with 2,500 Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) entering the workforce every year.<sup>v</sup>
- An estimated 40,000 chiropractic assistants (CAs)<sup>vi</sup> are in clinical<sup>vii</sup> and business management roles for chiropractic practices across the United States.
- It is estimated that Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) treat over 27 million Americans (adults and children) annually.<sup>viii</sup>
- Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) are educated in nationally accredited, four-year doctoral graduate school programs<sup>ix</sup> through a curriculum that includes a minimum of 4,200 hours of classroom, laboratory and clinical internship,<sup>x</sup> with the average DC program equivalent in classroom hours to allopathic (MD) and osteopathic (DO) medical schools.<sup>xi</sup>
- Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) are designated as physician-level providers in the vast majority of states and federal Medicare program. The essential services provided by DCs are also available in federal health delivery systems, including those administered by Medicaid, the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense, Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Federal Workers' Compensation, and all state workers' compensation programs.<sup>xii</sup>

## Patient Satisfaction/Clinical Effectiveness

- Chiropractic outperformed all other back pain treatments, including prescription medication, deep-tissue massage, yoga, pilates, and over-the-counter medication therapies.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) are the highest rated healthcare practitioner for low-back pain treatments above physical therapists (PTs), specialist physician/MD (i.e., neurosurgeons, neurologists, orthopaedic surgeons), and primary care physician/MD (i.e., family or internal medicine).<sup>xiv</sup>
- Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) provide a patient-centered, whole person approach to health care marked by greater interaction and better communication, resulting in consistently higher patient satisfaction ratings than medical doctors.<sup>xv</sup>
- Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) are utilized by all 32 National Football League teams<sup>xvi</sup> in optimizing the functionality, endurance and overall conditioning of professional football players in the treatment of neuromusculoskeletal strain injuries, including neck pain, low back pain, strains to hamstrings and quadriceps, and whiplash injuries.
- With prescription pain drug abuse now classified as an epidemic<sup>xvii</sup> in the United States and the number of spinal fusions soaring 500% over the last decade,<sup>xviii</sup> the essential services provided by Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) represent a primary care approach for the prevention, diagnosis and conservative management of back pain and spinal disorders that can often enable patients to reduce or avoid the need for these riskier treatments.
- Injured workers with similar injuries are 28 times less likely to have spinal surgery if the first point of contact is a Doctor of Chiropractic (DC), rather than a surgeon (MD).<sup>xix</sup>

- A recent study showed that treatment for low back pain initiated by a Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) costs up to 20 percent less than when started a MD.<sup>xx</sup>
- Chiropractic care has an excellent safety record.<sup>xxi</sup> This should be viewed in the context of other treatments for back pain such as steroids,<sup>xxii</sup> pain medications<sup>xxiii</sup> and surgery.<sup>xxiv</sup> As a result, Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) pay malpractice premiums at significantly lower rates than allopathic doctors (MDs).<sup>xxv</sup>
- The Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) collaborative, whole person-centered approach reflects the changing realities of health care delivery, and fits well into Accountable Care Organization (ACO) and patient-centered, medical home (PCMH) models bringing greater clinical efficiency, patient satisfaction and cost savings.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- A systematic review in 2010 found that most studies suggest spinal manipulation achieves equal or superior improvement in pain and function when compared with other commonly used interventions for short, intermediate, and long-term follow-up.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- The [American College of Physicians](#) and the [American Pain Society](#) jointly recommended in 2007 that clinicians consider spinal manipulation for patients who do not improve with self-care options.<sup>xxviii</sup>

## References

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