

THE CHIROPRACTIC PROFESSION

KEY FACTS + FIGURES

Chiropractic is a health care profession that focuses on disorders of the musculoskeletal system and the nervous system, and the effects of these disorders on general health. These disorders include, but are not limited to: back pain, neck pain, pain in the joints of the arms or legs, and headaches. Doctors of chiropractic (DCs) practice a conservative approach to health care that includes patient examination, diagnosis and treatment. DCs have broad diagnostic skills and are also trained to recommend therapeutic and rehabilitative exercises, as well as to provide nutritional, dietary and lifestyle counseling.

There are **77,000** chiropractors in the United States who are required to pass a series of four national board exams¹ and be state licensed.² Roughly another **3,000** DCs work in academic and management roles.

There are approximately **10,000** chiropractic students³ in **18** nationally accredited, chiropractic doctoral graduate education programs⁴ across the United States with **2,500** chiropractors entering the workforce every year.⁵

An estimated **40,000** chiropractic assistants (CAs)⁶ are in clinical⁷ and business management roles for chiropractic practices across the United States.

It is estimated that chiropractors treat **more than 35 million** Americans (adults and children) annually.⁸

Chiropractors are educated in nationally accredited, four-year doctoral graduate school programs⁹ through a curriculum that includes a minimum of **4,200** hours of classroom, laboratory and clinical internship,¹⁰ with the average DC program equivalent in classroom hours to allopathic (MD) and osteopathic (DO) medical schools.¹¹

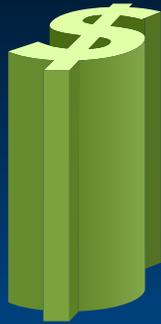
Chiropractors are designated as **physician-level providers** in the vast majority of states and the federal Medicare program. Essential services provided by DCs are also available in federal health delivery systems, including those administered by Medicaid, the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense, Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Federal Workers' Compensation, and all state workers' compensation programs.¹²

Patient Satisfaction/ Clinical Effectiveness

- In 2017, the American College of Physicians released updated low back pain guidelines that recommend first using non-drug treatments, such as spinal manipulation, for acute and chronic low back pain.¹³
- Similarly, a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2017 supports the use of spinal manipulative therapy as a first line of treatment for acute low back pain.¹⁴
- 95% of past-year chiropractic users say it's effective, and 97 percent of past-year chiropractic users are likely to see a chiropractor if they have neck/back pain.⁸
- In a consumer survey, chiropractic outperformed all other back pain treatments, including prescription medication, deep-tissue massage, yoga, pilates, and over-the-counter medication therapies.¹⁵
- Chiropractors are the highest consumer-rated healthcare practitioners for low-back pain treatments above physical therapists (PTs), specialist physicians/MDs (i.e., neurosurgeons, neurologists, orthopaedic surgeons), and primary care physicians/MDs (i.e., family or internal medicine).¹⁶

Conservative Care = Cost Effective

Low back pain care initiated by a medical doctor (MD)



-20%



Low back pain care initiated by a doctor of chiropractic (DC)



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Source: Lilledahl et al (2010) JMPT

- With prescription pain drug abuse now classified as an epidemic¹⁷ in the United States and the number of spinal fusions soaring 500% over the last decade,¹⁸ the essential services provided by chiropractors 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.
- Chiropractor's 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.¹⁹

- In 2015, the Joint Commission, the organization that accredits more than 20,000 health care systems in the U.S. (including every major hospital), recognized the value of non-drug approaches by adding chiropractic to its pain management standard.²⁰

Likelihood of Surgery For Workers with Back Injuries

First point of contact:
surgeon/MD

42.7%

First point of contact:
chiropractic physician/DC

1.5%



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Source: Keeney et al (2012) Spine

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