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The Path to Change in the US Healthcare System: Chiropractic Cost-Effectiveness

In our role as portal of entry/ direct access, primary contact providers to patients of all ages, focusing primarily on (but not limited to) the care of neuro-musculoskeletal disorders, our profession has demonstrated the ability to help drastically lower costs nationwide. We strongly encourage members of the legislature to act decisively to include chiropractic care in all health care bills, both by proactive inclusion and by the establishment of legislative language prohibiting all anti-competitive barriers to access. Research demonstrates that encouraging conservative care utilizing chiropractic's unique interventions will help offset the main cost drivers in the current healthcare system: drugs, surgery, and hospital-based rehabilitation. Recent studies on 21,743 patients over a four year period demonstrated the following cost reductions when care is directed by doctors of chiropractic:

- * 51.8% reduction in pharmaceutical costs
- * 43.2% fewer outpatient surgeries and procedures
- * 43.0% decrease in hospital admissions
- * 58.4% decrease in hospital days

Source: Clinical and Cost Outcomes Of An Integrative Medicine IPA. Sarnat, Richard; Winterstein, James, Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics 2004; 27: 336-347.

Imagine the implications on drug expenditures alone of expanding access to chiropractic care in all national health care plans and insurance systems. It is entirely possible, based upon current literature, that our nation could quickly realize a reduction in health care costs of many billions of dollars by allowing increased chiropractic utilization over more expensive and invasive medical care, when the patient chooses such care.

The research on the clinical and cost effectiveness of spinal manipulation and the application of the chiropractic adjustment process, the primary but not the only intervention applied by doctors of chiropractic, released over the past several decades offers exciting cost-savings and enhanced clinical efficiency prospects for the current embattled system. The cost effectiveness and clinical outcomes literature is so strong that chiropractic care is now included in virtually every US state, federal, and international benefits system (including Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans Administration and armed forces, state and federal workers compensation) for the care of common musculoskeletal and neuro-musculoskeletal conditions. Non-neuro-musculoskeletal conditions are also commonly addressed by chiropractic physicians using a variety of more conservative and effective approaches.

On behalf of the tens of millions of patients of all ages who regularly rely on chiropractic providers for important components of their health care, and on behalf of a system urgently in need of profound change and re-direction, we urge you to consider applying the findings of a massive and positive chiropractic research record as an asset in national health care reform. This is sound public policy, based on sound science.