

# Policy Brief

## Chiropractic Coverage in Medicare - HR 2654 April 2021

### **Policy Recommendations:**

H.R. 2654 should be supported. Full coverage of chiropractic in Medicare will result in less opioid use, reduced back surgeries and costs, and improved health.

**Overview:** Full coverage of chiropractic in Medicare will help eliminate inequities, improve outcomes, and reduce health disparities without increasing overall program costs. Support of HR 2654 will correct long-standing inequities associated with lack of full coverage for chiropractic services. Full coverage of chiropractic will improve health outcomes in some of our most vulnerable populations, reducing health disparities without increasing Medicare program costs.

**Problem:** The current Medicare policy creates barriers and discourages Medicare beneficiaries from receiving chiropractic care for back pain. Vulnerable populations including seniors, lower income females, and minority beneficiaries are most affected. Studies show that seniors who go to chiropractors have no increase in serious risks. Chiropractic patients recover from back pain faster and have fewer back surgeries a year later. These patients are less likely to use opioids and have fewer traumatic injuries and falls. They also have slower declines in activities of daily living and neck and back disability over time. Medicare beneficiaries who see chiropractors are more satisfied with the care they receive. Studies support full coverage for chiropractic services including imaging, examinations, exercise, lifestyle, and dietary counseling. A change to current policy will help reduce health disparities.

Medicare covers exams, treatments, and exercise instruction for beneficiaries when provided by other providers. When the same patients see a chiropractor, Medicare does not cover exams and has limited coverage of a single chiropractic service. Research shows that beneficiaries get better results with chiropractic treatment for back pain. A bill before Congress, HR 2654, supports full coverage for chiropractic services.

### **For more information read attached:**

Full-coverage chiropractic in Medicare: a proposal to eliminate inequities, improve outcomes, and reduce health disparities without increasing overall program costs. Leach, Robert A. *J Chiropr Humanit* 2020.

### **Other References**

- The Association Between Use of Chiropractic Care and Costs of Care Among Older Medicare Patients With Chronic Low Back Pain and Multiple Comorbidities. Weeks WB, et al. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* 2016;39(2):63-75 e2.
- Chiropractic use in the Medicare population: prevalence, patterns, and associations with 1-year changes in health and satisfaction with care. Weigel PA, et al. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* 2014;37(8):542-51.
- Risk of traumatic injury associated with chiropractic spinal manipulation in Medicare Part B beneficiaries aged 66 to 99 years. Whedon JM, et al. *Spine (Phila Pa 1976).* 2015;40(4):264-70.
- Trends in the use and cost of chiropractic spinal manipulation under Medicare Part B. Whedon JM, Song Y, Davis MA. *Spine J.* 2013;13(11):1449-54.
- Geographic variations in availability and use of chiropractic under Medicare. Whedon JM, Song Y. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* 2012;35(2):101-9.
- Impact of Chiropractic Care on Use of Prescription Opioids in Patients with Spinal Pain. Whedon JM, et al. *Pain Med.* 2020.
- Cross-Sectional Analysis of Per Capita Supply of Doctors of Chiropractic and Opioid Use in Younger Medicare Beneficiaries. Weeks WB, Goertz CM. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* 2016;39(4):263-6.