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ACA CHIROPRACTORS



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June 2, 2025

The Honorable Brett Guthrie  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2322A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: Elimination of the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

Dear Chairman Guthrie and Ranking Member Pallone:

The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) submits the following concerns regarding the Administration's recent proposal to reorganize and cut funding at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and, more specifically, the elimination of the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH).

ACA is the largest professional organization in the United States representing doctors of chiropractic (DCs). ACA members lead the chiropractic profession through collaborative relationships in public health, support for research and evidence-based practice, and increasingly as trusted members of integrated healthcare delivery teams to ensure the health and well-being of the estimated 35 million Americans who seek chiropractic services each year.

The annual NCCIH budget has been flatlined at \$170 million for the past several years, representing a mere 0.035% of the total annual \$48 billion NIH budget. Therefore, this proposed budget cut will not lead to any substantial decrease in the total amount of annual NIH funding but will cause irreparable harm to the entire chiropractic research enterprise.

**If allowed to move forward, the shuttering of NCCIH would have a devastating and long-lasting impact on the patients we serve and the future of the chiropractic profession.** Over the past 25 years, research supporting spinal manipulation for musculoskeletal conditions has grown dramatically. NCCIH and dedicated chiropractic researchers deserve much of the credit. **Since 1999, NCCIH has provided more than \$186 million to fund 437 projects involving chiropractic researchers, educational institutions, and others studying the benefits of chiropractic and/or spinal manipulation.** This represents 72% (437/605) of all projects<sup>1</sup> and 84% of all funding (\$186M/220M) provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Veterans Health Administration. Since the vast majority of funding from other government agencies/institutes has been co-funded for projects led by NCCIH, even these numbers significantly underestimate NCCIH's impact. As a result of NCCIH support of chiropractic research, there

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/-KrfqGDWMUCLd6bRPToWKQ/projects/charts>

has been exponential growth in both the quantity and quality of chiropractic research publications<sup>2</sup>. This has led to more than two dozen clinical practice recommendations supporting spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) for a broad range of musculoskeletal conditions. Prior to this, SMT – an effective, non-drug treatment for pain – was essentially ignored<sup>3</sup>.

As a result of producing research evidence for the safety and effectiveness of chiropractic care, we have seen exponential growth in the number of chiropractors treating patients in the Veterans Health Administration, the Department of Defense, and academic health systems across the country. Chiropractic researchers are now embedded within several major universities across the U.S., including Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, the University of Minnesota and Duke University School of Medicine, and receive the majority of their funding from NCCIH. This research funding also indirectly allowed for integration of chiropractic clinic service lines at those academic institutions. The University of Pittsburgh recently approved a new Doctor of Chiropractic program that has received a large NCCIH grant, establishing it as a research resource center for all the chiropractic programs in the U.S. The bottom line is that chiropractic research has played a critical role in enhancing the cultural and academic authority of the chiropractic profession. This would have been impossible without NCCIH funding.

**The chiropractic contribution to healthcare delivery has never been more critical. Low back pain is a public health crisis, and the cause of “three number ones.”** Back pain is the number one single cause of disability worldwide, impacting more than 600 million people across the globe. Low back pain is also the number one reason for an opioid to be prescribed in the primary care delivery system. Low back and neck pain are the number one most-costly medical conditions to treat, surpassing even the costs of treating heart disease and cancer. Prescription medications, injections, and surgery are not the answer for most patients, and should certainly not be the first line of treatment for back or neck pain. These approaches are not always effective or necessary, and even the most benign treatments carry the risk of substantial harm. For example, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen can cause internal bleeding, and users have a greater risk of heart attacks. Acetaminophen carries the risk of liver damage, especially in people who drink alcoholic beverages. A recent guideline published in the prestigious *British Medical Journal* recommended against more interventional procedures for low back pain. Most importantly, research shows that patients are less likely to transition from acute to chronic low back pain when they see a chiropractor as their first-contact provider.<sup>4</sup>

The number of Americans who seek treatment from chiropractic and other types of complementary and integrative healthcare (CIH) providers has grown exponentially over the past few decades. It is estimated that over one-third of the adult U.S. population has seen a chiropractor or CIH provider for a health-related condition. Recognition of the enormous utilization of CIH within the U.S. is what initially led NIH to establish the Office of Alternative Medicine in 1992, which eventually became the Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) in 2014. This name change reflected widening acknowledgment that healthcare professions such as chiropractic were being integrated into interprofessional healthcare delivery systems and synergistic with – not alternative to – traditional medical healthcare procedures. **In fact, all current medical guidelines for the management of low back**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-0383/13/19/5668>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> <https://bmjgroup.com/back-pain-recommendations/>

**pain recommend that spinal manipulation and other CIH procedures should be the first line of treatment.** Research evidence has shown that adherence to this clinical practice recommendation leads to faster recovery at lower cost, the ultimate goal of value-based health care.

**The proposed elimination of NCCIH stands to knock back the gains made over the past 25 years by a decade or more. A thoughtfully constructed foundation of chiropractic research will be swept to the ground, with no one there to pick up the pieces.** Critical research will be halted and never completed. Research infrastructure at chiropractic educational institutions nationwide will no longer be available. Junior chiropractic researchers will no longer have access to funds for training or the student loan repayment program that allows them the financial freedom to pursue a career in science. Seasoned investigators will retire early when funding is no longer available to support their work. It is critical to understand that Big Pharma and medical device manufacturers can fund their own research and continue to prosper without NIH funding, but this is not true for the chiropractic profession. NCCIH is literally the lifeline to chiropractic research activity, and without it the chiropractic research infrastructure in the U.S. will slowly unravel until it no longer exists.

As this issue proceeds, we encourage you to consider the importance of NCCIH's research in advancing complementary and integrative health services and practices. Members of ACA have found that NCCIH and the research it supports is of great value, leading to advancements in knowledge that help patients manage pain while decreasing opioid usage and reducing medical spending on spine-related surgical services. Chiropractic is an evolving profession, and we hope that as you assess the Administration's proposal, you continue to utilize chiropractors' expertise to ensure that all Americans have access to the best possible care. If you have any questions regarding our remarks, please contact John Falardeau, ACA Senior Vice President for Public Policy and Advocacy, at [jfalardeau@acatoday.org](mailto:jfalardeau@acatoday.org) or (703) 812-0214.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marcus Nynas DC". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the letters "M", "N", and "D" being particularly prominent.

Marcus Nynas, DC  
President