

LOW-BACK PAIN

The Manga Report, prepared by highly respected health economists at the University of Ottawa, represents the largest and most thorough analysis of the scientific literature on back pain ever. It was commissioned by the Ontario ministry of health due to the alarming increase in both direct and indirect costs associated with low-back pain. The Report clearly demonstrates that chiropractic management of low-back pain is more effective for pain relief, more cost-effective, and produces higher levels of patient satisfaction than other forms of management.

Here are some excerpts from its executive summary:

- On the evidence, particularly the most scientifically valid clinical studies, spinal manipulation applied by chiropractors is shown to be more effective than alternative treatments for low-back pain. Many medical therapies are of questionable validity or are clearly inadequate.

- There is no clinical or case-control study that demonstrates or even implies that chiropractic spinal manipulation is unsafe in the treatment of low-back pain. Our reading of the literature suggests that chiropractic manipulation is safer than medical management of low-back pain.
- There is an overwhelming body of evidence indicating that chiropractic management of low-back pain is more cost-effective than medical management.
- There would be highly significant cost savings if more management of low-back pain was transferred from physicians to chiropractors. Evidence from Canada and other countries suggests potential savings of many hundreds of millions annually. Workers' compensation studies report that injured workers with the same specific diagnosis of low-back pain returned to work much sooner when treated by chiropractors than by physicians.
- There is good empirical evidence that patients are very satisfied with chiropractic management of low-back pain and considerably less satisfied with physician management.
- Despite official medical disapproval and economic disincentive to patients, the use of chiropractic has grown steadily over the years. Chiropractors are now accepted as a legitimate healing profession by the public and an increasing number of physicians.

The Report recommended that there should be a shift in policy to encourage and prefer chiropractic services for most patients with low-back pain, and chiropractic should be fully insured under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.

So next time you or someone you know suffers from low-back pain, don't reach for the pill bottle, call your friendly chiropractor.

Dr. Liana Harper and Dr. Pierre Gaulin are in private practice in Coaldale, and are the proud parents of two healthy children. They can be reached at

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Disclaimer: The above represents the opinion of the authors, based on extensive research and years of clinical practice. It is not intended for self-diagnosis and treatment. Please consult a health care professional as your specific condition might require different recommendations.