

[IMAGE]

Chiropractic for Chronic Pain: A Key Piece of the Puzzle

By Editorial Staff

Chronic pain is a major issue these days, and finding solutions that don't cause even more pain and misery (read: opioid abuse / addiction) is an even bigger issue. So, it's refreshing when we get a glimpse of nondrug approaches that are working. And boy is this one working.

Findings from a unique Medicaid pilot project in Rhode Island involving high-use Medicaid recipients from two health plans were recently presented to the state's Department of Health, demonstrating stellar outcomes with regard to medication use, ER visits, health care costs and patient satisfaction.

Since 2012, Rhode Island Medicaid "Community of Care" enrollees suffering from chronic pain have participated in an integrated chronic pain program designed to "reduce pain levels, improve function and overall health outcomes, reduce emergency room costs, and through a holistic approach and behavioral change models, educate members in self-care and accountability."

The program features holistic nurse case management with referrals to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) providers including chiropractors, massage therapists and acupuncturists; and patient education including stress-reduction tips and more.

Community of Care enrollees "have significant economic challenges as well as bio-psycho-social disorders." CoC enrollees, as might be expected, tend to make more visits to emergency rooms compared to other patients.

pain relief - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Here are some of the key findings from the pilot program thus far (2012-2015), showing average *per-enrollee* improvements post-referral into the integrated chronic pain program compared to pre-referral for enrollees with at least 12 months pre-referral data and 12 months post-referral data. Note that these improvements are also significant compared to the control group, consisting of CoC members who did not enroll in the chronic pain program.

- *Rx Scripts*: Prescriptions declined from a whopping 70.42 pre-referral to 25.97 post-referral.
- *Opioid Scripts*: Opioid prescription use declined from 7.69 pre-referral to 1.10 post-referral.

- *ER Visits:* Emergency-room visits, a major issue for CoC enrollees, declined from 7.57 visits pre-referral to 2.98 visits post-referral.
- *Total Claims Costs:* Average pre-referral claims costs approached \$20,000 (\$19,456.59) per enrollee pre-referral; post-referral, claims costs declined to \$14,150.76, including CAM costs.
- *Patient Satisfaction:* According to a third-party survey of program participants, 92 percent "agree or strongly agree their CAM provider reduced their pain level"; 82 percent "believe their quality of life has improved by participating"; and 96 percent "would recommend the program to friends or family suffering from chronic pain or fatigue."

Your doctor can tell you more about chronic pain, the opioid epidemic and how nondrug approaches such as chiropractic care are proving more effective and safer than medication.

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