

[IMAGE]

## Your Best Bet for Evaluating Back Pain

According to the National Institutes of Health, Americans spend approximately \$50 billion a year on medical costs and remedies for low back pain. For many, these costs are an unwelcome but necessary financial burden; however, according to a recent study, people may be able to save money right at the pain evaluation phase - without sacrificing the quality of their health care.

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, compared magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to radiographs (X-rays) for the purpose of diagnosing low back pain. Three hundred eighty patients who had been ordered by a physician to have their low-back pain evaluated received either an MRI or an X-ray; outcomes for all participants were nearly identical, regardless of which type of diagnostic evaluation they received. The study also indicated that, on average, an MRI cost \$321 more than an X-ray, and suggested that the use of MRI may offer little added benefit, and could even increase the number of unnecessary surgical interventions.

For chiropractors, X-rays are a standard method of imaging the spine and evaluating and diagnosing a variety of health problems, not the least of which is back pain. For those who think new always means better (particularly when it comes to health care), take heed of the results of this study - in this case, X-ray imaging is just as effective as (and less expensive than) MRI in finding out what's causing your back pain and getting you on the road to recovery.

### *Reference:*

Jarvik JG, Hollingworth W, Martin B, et al. Rapid magnetic resonance imaging vs. radiographs for patients with low back pain. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, June 4, 2003: Volume 289, Number 21, p.2810-18.

For more information on back pain, go to [www.chiroweb.com/find/tellmeabout/backpain.html](http://www.chiroweb.com/find/tellmeabout/backpain.html)

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