

[IMAGE]

Chiropractic Better Than Medication for Neck Pain

A study published in the research journal *Annals of Internal Medicine* and widely reported by mainstream media suggests chiropractic spinal manipulation is more effective than over-the-counter and prescription medication for relieving acute and subacute neck pain. Spinal manipulative therapy was more effective than medication in both the short and long term.

The study involved 272 adults ages 18-65 with neck pain of two to 12 weeks' duration. Participants were recruited from a university research center and a pain management clinic in Minnesota. Spinal manipulation was provided courtesy of a doctor of chiropractic. According to the study, six chiropractors, each with at least five years' experience, provided treatment, with the specific spinal level to be treated and the number of treatments provided left to the discretion of the individual chiropractor.

Instead of chiropractic care, some patients in the study group received medication as monitored by a licensed medical physician. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), acetaminophen (aspirin), or both served as the first line of pharmacological therapy. With patients who did not respond to or could not tolerate these drugs, narcotic medications and muscle relaxants were prescribed. With each patient, the MD determined the type of medication administered and the number of patient visits.

neck pain - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Self-reported outcomes, including pain, were measured six times during the 12-week treatment period: at two initial (baseline) appointments; two, four, eight and 12 weeks after treatment began; and on two occasions post-treatment (weeks 26 and 52). Objective measures of cervical spine motion were measured at four and 12 weeks by seven trained examiners who were unaware of which treatment the patients were receiving.

After 12 weeks of treatment, a significantly higher proportion of the SMT group experienced reductions of pain of at least 50% [compared to the medication group]. Specifically, at week 12, more than 82 percent of the SMT group reported a 50 percent or greater reduction in pain; 57 percent reported at least a 75 percent reduction and 32 percent reported a 100 percent reduction. By comparison, the medication group reported reductions of only 69 percent, 33 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

In terms of long-term improvement, 75 percent of the SMT group reported at least a 50 percent reduction in pain after 26 weeks, while nearly 81 percent reported at least a 50 percent reduction at 52 weeks. The medication group's improvement fluctuated from 59 percent reporting pain reduction of 50 percent or more at 26 weeks to 69 percent reporting the same reduction at 52 weeks.

"Participants who received medication seemed to fare worse, with a consistently higher use of pain medications for neck pain throughout the trial's observational period," said the study authors. In other words, chiropractic was a much better choice than medication for neck pain.

Interestingly enough, a third group of patients who received home exercise advice instead of chiropractic care or medication also fared better than the medication group during the study period. That means two forms of conservative, drug-free care - both of which are commonly provided by doctors of chiropractic - were more effective than over-the-counter and/or prescription drugs. The moral of the story? The next time you or someone you know is suffering from neck pain, don't turn to the medicine cabinet or a medical doctor; turn to your doctor of chiropractic.

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