

[IMAGE]

## The Future of Health Care

With all of the recent reports stressing the efficacy of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies, it was only a matter of time before research began exploring the role doctors of chiropractic could play as cost-effective primary care providers (PCPs).

A paper published recently in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics (JMPT)* revealed that a managed care network consisting of doctors of chiropractic as PCPs provided equivalent care and saved substantial costs compared to care provided by medical doctors and osteopaths.

The analysis found that chiropractors were not only able to diagnose and treat patients at a level nearly equal to medical doctors, but that those same patients were admitted to hospitals less frequently, spent less time in hospitals for care, underwent fewer surgeries, and used far fewer pharmaceuticals than other health maintenance organization (HMO) patients, resulting in tremendous cost savings and high patient satisfaction.

"Reliance on the conventional medical model, in which pharmaceuticals and surgical interventions represent first-line treatment, may not provide the best therapeutic index to our patients," noted the study's authors. They added that a chiropractic gatekeeper model of managed care "seems to demonstrate the potential superiority of an integrated health system in which chiropractic and CAM therapies play a significant primary care role."

If nothing else, this information serves as a glimpse into the future of health care - a future in which doctors of chiropractic will treat a larger range of patients using an integrative approach to medicine.

### *Reference:*

Sarnat RL, Winterstein J. Clinical and cost outcomes of an integrative medicine IPA. *JMPT* June 2004;27:336-347.

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