



August, 2015 Newsletter

Most Chronic Pain Patients Use Alternative Therapies, But Many Don't Tell Their Doctors

The statement above comes from a PRNewswire release from Kaiser Permanente on July 20, 2015. The release is based on a study published that same day in the American Journal of Managed Care (AJMC) titled "Acupuncture and Chiropractic Care: Utilization and Electronic Medical Record Capture." The study, conducted by Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research, reviewed the questionnaires returned from 6,068 patients who were suffering from chronic pain. The responses showed that 47 percent reported using chiropractic care. Additionally, 32 percent said they used acupuncture, and 21 percent used both.

The study showed that one third of those who used acupuncture did not tell their Kaiser medical physician. An even higher percentage, 42%, of those who saw a chiropractor did not tell their MD. The study also notes that many of those who went for either chiropractic or acupuncture did so regardless of their insurance coverage.

Dr. Charles Elder, lead author of the study commented, "Our study confirms that most of our patients with chronic pain are seeking complementary treatments to supplement the care we provide in the primary care setting. The problem is that too often, doctors don't ask about this treatment, and patients don't volunteer the information."

Dr. Elder went on to state, "We want our patients to get better, so we need to ask them about the alternative and complementary approaches they are using. If we know what's working and what's not working, we can do a better job advising patients, and we may be able to recommend an approach they haven't tried."

The AJMC article begins by reporting that, "Acupuncture and chiropractic care are popular among patients, especially those who suffer from chronic musculoskeletal pain. Caring for this population has become an increasingly important and visible challenge for the healthcare system. Pharmaceuticals are commonly used for managing pain, yet the use of such agents on a chronic basis is of questionable efficacy, and can be associated with high costs and significant adverse effects."

"It is interesting to note from this study that almost half of those enrolled in a medical health HMO decided to use chiropractic regardless of their insurance coverage," says Dr. Robert Braile, a chiropractor and chairman of the International Chiropractors Association public relations committee. "The study also showed that 55% of those using acupuncture did so based upon a physician referral, while 9% went to the chiropractor because of this type of referral." Braile concluded, "This statistic demonstrates that medical physicians still harbor some prejudice against chiropractic. The desire to avoid a negative response could account for the high percentage of people who do not mention receiving chiropractic to their medical physician."