

I am Dr. Bryan Ludwig, a chiropractor licensed in New York State for 18 years. For the last 4 years I served as the Albany District President for the NY Chiropractic Council. I have testified for the New York Chiropractic Council on the Health budget for the last three years and most recently before the hearing on the Potential Impact of the Proposed NYS Workers' Compensation Fee in December of 2014.

First let me note my organization's appreciation for the legislative proclamation making September 2015 one again Chiropractic Health Month in New York. Such recognition is important to the profession as it is representative of the fact that chiropractic care is an integral part of the overall healthcare system in New York.

Last year I spoke about the New York Chiropractic Council's mission, to direct people to the realization that healing comes from within and that ultimately the promotion of **health and wellness** is superior to the treatment of disease. I wanted to expand on what my profession does since there seems to be many myths and misconceptions. Our profession began with the core concept that we are self-healing. That our nervous system directs this healing. Science continues to find that the nervous system and the immune system are not separate but one system. The common core among my fellow chiropractors is knowing that when something overwhelms our ability to adapt, it will distort our nervous system's function, and will create what is known as a Vertebral Subluxation. We know this distortion can be detected by a doctor of chiropractic and removed or managed with a chiropractic adjustment thereby allowing the return of healing to the patient through normal nervous and immune function. We do not blindly "crack" areas of back pain, we do not practice medicine, nor do we compete with health professions that treat symptoms or diseases. So instead of being an alternative for medicine or other health professions, we are different. Doctors of chiropractic promote health instead of attacking disease.

The last two years I listened to how the treatment of disease and symptoms continues to get more and more costly and take up a greater allocation of the budget. There were a few wins that reduced costs, such as the effectiveness of smoking prevention programs. However, overall, there are more sick people and therefore increased healthcare costs. Wouldn't it be great if we could foster greater health and therefore have to tend to less sick people? We can!

Here is one way how: There is a growing body of peer-reviewed, scientific evidence that shows care provided by doctors of chiropractic reduces overall healthcare costs, improves health behaviors, and enhances patients' quality-of-life.

During the recent hearing on proposed changes to the NYS Workers Compensation system, I reviewed established evidence that in addition to wellness benefits, demonstrated a clear cost-value benefit to chiropractic care. I would like to briefly summarize some of these studies for you now.

*Health Maintenance Care in Work-Related Low Back Pain and Its Association With Disability Recurrence*, Manuel Cifuentes, MD, PhD, Joanna Willetts, MS, and Radoslaw Wasiak,

PhD, MA, MSc, JOEM April 2011) was a study to compare occurrence of repeated disability episodes across types of health care providers who treat claimants with new episodes of work related low back pain (LBP). In work-related nonspecific LBP, the use of health maintenance care provided by physical therapist or physician services was associated with a higher disability recurrence than in chiropractic services or no treatment.

The study clearly showed that the likelihood of recurrent disability due to LBP for recipients of services during the health maintenance care period by all other provider groups was consistently worse when compared with recipients of health maintenance care by chiropractors. Care from doctors of chiropractors during the disability episode ("curative"), during the health maintenance care period (main exposure variable, "preventative"), and the combination of both (curative and preventative) was associated with lower disability reoccurrence HRs. This clear trend deserves some attention considering that chiropractors are the only group of providers that explicitly state that they have an effective treatment approach to regain and maintain health.

For 14 years one of my patients suffered with low back pain prior to seeing me. "Sue" had all kinds of expensive medical care from drugs to physical therapy to being recommended surgery. She was admitted to have spinal fusion surgery when the doctor was called away for an emergency. She was told that without the surgery she would be in a wheel chair with in 5 years. After having her nervous system function improved with chiropractic care she was able to heal over time and even started and finished remodeling her bathroom.

Another patient, "Lorraine", was suffering from many things including stiffness, ringing in her ears, insomnia, lack of energy, weight gain, diarrhea, and a constant sinus condition. For 13 years she suffered prior to starting chiropractic care with me. Two doctors wanted to send her to psychiatric help. She was on several drugs including flexeril, Librax and cortisone. After starting chiropractic care she has more energy, sleeps great, her sinus condition improved, and her ears only ring occasionally. She began losing weight. Best of all Lorraine is no longer on medication.

We need a better way, and chiropractic can be part of that solution. By keeping New Yorkers healthier in the first place, chiropractic care ultimately will save money for New York State.

Its simple common sense: by returning and keeping people optimally healthy there would be less need for funding health care in New York to treat the consequences of poor health.

*Clinical and Cost Outcomes of an Integrative Medicine IPA FROM: **J Manipulative Physiol Ther 2004 (Jun) ; 27 (5): 336-347** Sarnat RL, Winterstein J In 1999, a large Chicago Blue Cross and Shield HMO began to utilize Doctors of Chiropractic as a first choice option. The DC's focused on assessment and evaluation of risk factors and practiced with a*

non-pharmaceutical/non-surgical approach. Insurance claims and patient surveys were analyzed to compare clinical outcomes, costs and member satisfaction with a normative control group. During the 4-year study, this integrative medical approach, emphasizing a variety of complementary and alternative medical therapies, resulted in lower patient costs and improved clinical outcomes for patients. Specifically, the patients who went to DC's as their first choice option had 43% decreases in hospital admissions, 52% reductions in pharmaceutical costs and 43% fewer outpatient surgeries and procedures. **I cannot underscore enough the importance of these dramatic results.**

A follow up study from 2003 to 2005 found that during the prior 7 year period and with a larger population, there were even more impressive cost savings. How much? Over seven years of chiropractic-supervised care, there was a decrease of 60.2% in-hospital admissions, 59% less hospital stays, 62% less outpatient surgeries and procedures, and 85% less pharmaceutical costs when compared with conventional medicine IPA performance for the same HMO product in the same geography and within same timeframe.

In general the longer chiropractic care was utilized the better the outcomes and the greater the cost savings to the system. For instance the first 3 years hospital admissions decreased by 43%, by the end of the 7 years it had decreased by 60%. In the first three years cost for pharmaceutical costs decreased by 43%, at the end of the seven years it had decreased by 85%.

Traditionally, barriers to chiropractic care have been due to a misunderstanding of chiropractic. Removal of these barriers and increasing access to quality chiropractic care has been conclusively shown to improve health outcomes as well as reducing the cost for end stage expensive care.- Clinical and Cost Outcomes of an Integrative Medicine IPA FROM: J Manipulative Physiol Ther 2004 (Jun); 27 (5): 336-347 Sarnat RL, Winterstein J.

Some of those barriers have been in the NYS Workers' Compensation system for decades. Again, chiropractic care has consistently been proven to be cost effective, while providing improved outcomes for patients. An injured worker should not have their right to choose chiropractic care effectively denied them. An injured worker should also maintain the right to seek chiropractic care that is consistent with that established by the Medical Treatment Guidelines, and that right should not be undermined in any way by an inconsistent fee schedule. If patients cannot seek chiropractic care, I believe injured workers will be forced to seek out more expensive health care options, options that tend to lead to long term prescription drug use. That is why we need a fair and reasonable chiropractic fee schedule without gaps or leaving interpretation of care up to the insurance carrier.

Chiropractors have historically received artificially low levels of reimbursement in Workers' Compensation in New York. While the proposed fee schedule may be a step in the right direction, we remain concerned about receiving adequate reimbursement for the services

we provide, so we can return injured workers back to the job faster and at lower cost than alternative health care treatments.

Any New Yorker should have the right to seek out chiropractic care without undue interference in New York. I shouldn't have to keep telling my patients that I do not accept their Medicaid insurance; rather, it is Medicaid that does not accept Chiropractic.

When sick people become truly healthy they no longer need drugs, they no longer need surgery. When sick people become well our health budgets don't swell as we try to treat symptoms and chronic disease. Again, the New York Chiropractic Council's mission is to direct people to the realization that healing comes from within and that ultimately the promotion of **health and wellness** is superior to the treatment of disease. We must prevent disease. This is what chiropractic does. It really is that simple. And it really works!

There are a few things that improve our health and change our genetic potential, some are things we can do, some are things we can stop doing. I already used the example of stopping smoking as a way to reduce sickness and the cost of chronic health care. You may realize that eating properly and exercise can also improve health and change our genetic potential. Well when you take a person's nervous system that is sending distorted messages and return it to normal function with a chiropractic adjustment this, also naturally improves that person's health and genetic potential – without costly drugs, invasive procedures or needless surgeries.

Members of this joint committee, I ask that you recognize the proven cost benefits and effectiveness of chiropractic care. I ask that you acknowledge the historic, unjustified bias against chiropractic in our state Workers' Compensation system, in our Medicaid system, in our health care system. Finally, as they contemplate a new fee schedule, I ask that you remind the Workers' Compensation Board to be true to its mandate to protect the injured worker by recognizing their right to seek out appropriate, quality health care, in a system that respects both patients and all health care providers.

On behalf of the New York Chiropractic Council, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.