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**2017 05.09 Health Matters**

**Back Pain**

**Joe**

**This is Health Matters, reporting on non-medical treatments for back pain.**

**Kristen**

**Two out of three people are likely to experience significant lower back pain at some point in their lives. So alternative treatments that work are important to consider. For one thing, most back pain goes away over time. Even severe back pain. For another, the use of prescripition drugs for severe pain has resulted in an epidemic of opioid abuse.**

**Taushona**

**Doctors are now recommending non-medical treatments for back pain -- massage, acupuncture and even homeopathy and chiropractic.**

**Joe**

**In a recent NY Times article, a practicing physician cites recent data in support of chiropractic . He writes “it’s time for me (and other physicians) to rethink our biases.” Because recent studies have found that spinal manipulation seems to be as effective as medical therapies.**

**Kristen**

**Until recently chiropractic treatment for back pain was not sanctioned as a legitimate practice by physicians. Or by the medical profession in general. As recently as 2002, the National Center for Biotechnology Information published a study by physicians that stated there is no convincing evidence for the effectiveness of chiropractic for acute or chronic low back pain.”**

**Taushona**

**And yet, there are about 5,000 chiropractors practicing in North America. Chiropractors who primarily treat back and neck pain, including whiplash. And they treat other conditions as well . Some chiropractors claim they can effectively treat PMS, pneumonia, stage 1 hypertension, infantile colic, gastrointestinal problem and asthma. But evidence for these claims is negligible. And what does exist is inconclusive.**

**Joseph**

**The primary reason physicians have been skeptical about chiropractic has been a lack of evidence. There were very few well designed studies that demonstrated the healing value of chiropractic. Or its safety. Or the range of conditions it could treat effectively. But over the past decade or so data has been slowly coming in. There is now research which supports the claim that chiropractic treatment produce sstatistically significant benefits. Doctors are acknowledging that chiropractic does have role to play as an alternative treatment for back and neck pain. A role that is non-invasive and does not rely on addictive painkillers.**

**Kristen**

**The physician writing in the NY Times dismisses safety as a concern when it comes to chiropractic. This, too, is new thinking. Because there have been long-standing claims that chiropractic is not safe. Current data demonstrate it’s as safe as any other treatment. And safer than some medical interventions have proven to be.**

**Taushona**

**Though there is a safety question related to chiropractic manipulation of the upper back. A Canadian study found that manipulation of the upper back can result in a short-term decrease of blood flow to the brain. But only in people under 45. More research is needed on this one.**

**Joe**

**Despite past claims against it, chiropractic is significantly more popular for back pain than medical alternatives that are more invasive. A large recent survey found that over 30% of people with back and neck pain chose chiropractic treatment And data confirm that people go to chiropractors for back pain because it helps them. Trials that included more than 1,700 patients found that spinal manipulation resulted in improved function.**

**Kristen**

**Just last month the American College of Physicians released new clinical practice guidelines for “the noninvasive treatment of sub-acute back pain.” By non-invasive they mean non-pharmaceutical and non-surgical. Their recommendations include heat, massage, acupuncture, physical therapy and chiropractic as first-line therapies .**

**Taushona**

**One deterrent to spinal manipulation by a chiropractor is the cost. Health insurance doesn’t pay for it.**

**Joe**

**And yet, more invasive interventions can still cost a lot of money. There is considerable evidence that people spend less on complementary and alternative medicine for back pain that people who rely entirely on traditional medicine. And prescription pain medications can cost a lot more than just money. Who can even estimate the emotional, family and communal cost of opioid addiction?**

**Kristen**

**Here’s the bottom line: Most back pain resolves over time. Which is why non-invasive interventions focus on relieving symptoms. One of the primary principles of alternative medicine is simply allowing the body to heal. If you treat the symptoms, rest, eat right and exercise very carefully when compromised, your body will slowly restore itself.**

**Joe**

**Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA.  Produced and written by Cynthia Poten. Engineered by Joseph Orozco.  Our readers were Kristen Marshall, Taushona Moon and Joseph Orozco.  For this audio and more information, visit our download area at  www.kidefm.org. Thank you for listening. Your health adds to the health of our community.**

**Sources and Links**

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