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## **A Comparison of Chiropractic and Medical Costs for the Treatment of Sacroiliac Joint Sprain**

### **Workers' Comp. Data Base of 4 Million Reveals Benefits of Chiropractic over Medical Care**

By Brad McKechnie, DC, DACAN

Recently, the Texas Chiropractic Association and Texas Chiropractic College have acquired a computer data base consisting of over four million billing records concerning workers' compensation claims in Texas. This data base was obtained from a private financial consulting firm that collects claims data for big business. From this information, companies are able to calculate rates for various employee benefit packages.

As the claims data file includes records from all classes of health care providers involved in the Texas workers' compensation system, it provides an interdisciplinary comparative analysis of provider behavior and billing practices according to ICD-9 diagnostic codes.

The following is a comparative analysis of patients treated exclusively by chiropractic physicians versus those patients treated exclusively by medical physicians for sacroiliac joint sprains from January 1991 to the present. During this period, there were 170 exclusive chiropractic cases and 371 exclusive medical cases of sacroiliac joint sprain.

**Sacroiliac Joint Sprain: Medical Management**

Total number of cases:	371 cases
Total amount billed	\$424,697.00
Total amount paid:	\$339,092.00
Case average based on paid claims:	\$914.00 per case

**Sacroiliac Joint Sprain: Chiropractic Management**

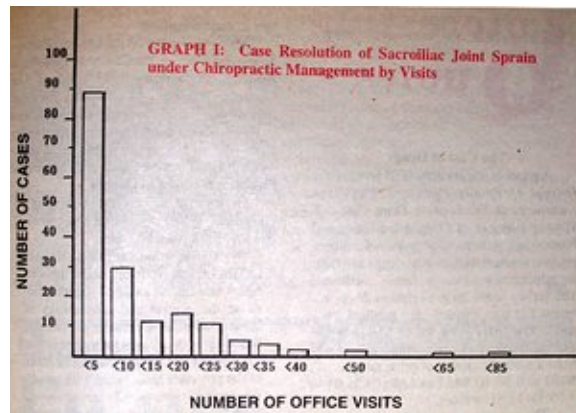
Total number of cases	170
cases Total amount billed:	\$127,785.00
Total amount paid:	\$109,320.00
Case average based on paid claims:	\$643.00 per case

Medical claims for sacroiliac joint sprain (averaging \$914.00 per case) ran approximately 30 percent higher than chiropractic claims for the same diagnosis during the time period surveyed. It should be noted that in the Texas workers' compensation system, chiropractic physicians and medical physicians are on equal footing, a result of provisions of the 1989 Workers' Compensation Act. Thus, medical doctors and chiropractic physicians are entitled to the same levels of reimbursement for services based on CPT codes. Due to this equality, it is unlikely that differences in levels of billing would account for the immense discrepancy between the medical claims and chiropractic claims for the same diagnostic category. Further analysis of the chiropractic data was performed to examine case resolution in terms of office visits:

### Case Resolution for Chiropractic Management of Sacroiliac Joint Sprains

<b># of Visits</b>	<b># of cases resolved</b>	<b>% of cases completed</b>
1 to 5 visits	87 cases	51.17% resolved
6 to 10 visits	29 cases	68.23% resolved
11 to 15 visits	12 cases	75.29% resolved
16 to 20 visits	14 cases	83.52% resolved
21 to 25 visits	11 cases	90.00% resolved
26 to 30 visits	5 cases	92.94% resolved
31 to 35 visits	4 cases	95.29% resolved
36 to 40 visits	2 cases	96.47% resolved
41 to 45 visits	2 cases	98.82% resolved
61 to 65 visits	1 case	99.41% resolved
81 to 85 visits	1 case	100% resolved

Graph I depicts case resolution by number of office visits from the data given above. Graph II depicts total office visits rendered by week for chiropractic care.



Graph 2

The chiropractic data was further analyzed to determine the number of weeks required for resolution of sacroiliac joint sprains under chiropractic management. According to the data reviewed, 30 cases (18 percent of the cases) treated by chiropractic physicians were resolved in one office visit. Additionally, one third of the cases resolved in one week of treatment or less and over half of the cases resolved in three weeks of treatment or less!

**Case Resolution in Weeks for Chiropractic Treatment of Sacroiliac Joint Sprain**

One week .....33% of cases resolved

Two weeks.....46% of cases resolved

Three weeks.....54% of cases resolved

Four weeks.....61% of cases resolved

Five weeks.....64% of cases resolved

Six weeks.....67% of cases resolved

Seven weeks.....71% of cases resolved

Eight weeks.....75% of cases resolved

Nine weeks.....79% of cases resolved

Ten weeks.....81% of cases resolved

Eleven weeks.....85% of cases resolved

Twelve weeks.....87% of cases resolved

From this data, it is apparent that chiropractic management of sacroiliac joint sprain is more cost effective than medical management for the same condition. Also, patients are not maintained on the treatment rolls for extended periods of time, which is contrary to many opinions rendered as to the nature of chiropractic treatment schedules! As work progresses on the analysis of this immense data base, more profiles comparing medical and chiropractic management for the same class of condition will be released.

*Brad McKechnie, DC, DACAN*

*Pasadena, Texas*



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