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## **Two Virginia Studies Reveal Chiropractic's Cost-Effectiveness**

By Editorial Staff

The Virginia Chiropractic Association and the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research have funded two studies of note: one evaluating chiropractic compared to other specialties; one investigating the effects of mandated insurance coverage for chiropractic treatment.

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A Comparison of the Costs of Chiropractors versus Alternative Medical Practitioners

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This study is a nationwide survey to assess costs of six different types of medical providers, including chiropractic, for treating similar back-related conditions.

A detailed cost examination revealed that chiropractors had the lowest average charge per visit (under \$16) of the six providers, and the highest percentage of charges paid out-of-pocket by patients (75 percent of cost typical visit is paid by patient, with insurance paying less than \$5 per visit).

DCs were the most frequented among the six provider groups for musculoskeletal conditions (nine annual visits), and sprains and strains, (4 annual visits), and thus had the highest annual charges in these categories of the six groups.

Treatment costs for specific conditions, e.g., patients with arthritis, found chiropractic costs significantly lower than the other five practitioner groups. Treatment costs were also lower for disc disorders and various low back conditions with chiropractic, while treatment costs of sprains, strains or dislocations were lower or comparable to the other five practitioner groups.

The study stated: "Costs for chiropractic care do not differ statistically from those incurred for treatment provided solely by general practitioners. Moreover, for many conditions, the specialist had higher costs than the treatment regimen provided by the GP. For instance, treatment of bursitis by internists cost \$202 more than what the GP charges. Treatment by surgeons for four conditions adds between \$318-436 to annual medical costs. 'Other' physicians added \$1,233 to annual treatment charges for disc disorders."

The report concluded: "Chiropractic is a lower cost option for several prominent back-related ailments. This is despite its 'last resort' status for many patients. One explanation for this is the lower insurance coverage of chiropractic care. If chiropractic care is insured to the extent other specialists are stipulated, it may emerge as a first option for patients with certain medical conditions. This could very well result in a decrease in overall treatment costs for these conditions."

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## **Mandated Health Insurance Coverage for Chiropractic Treatment: An Economic Assessment, with Implications for the Commonwealth of Virginia**

*Leonard G. Schifrin*

*Chancellor Professor of Economics*

*The College of William and Mary*

*Williamsburg, Virginia*

*Clinical Professor of Preventive Medicine*

*Medical College of Virginia*

*Richmond, Virginia*

The Schifrin study examines the effects of mandates on insurance costs, the utilization of chiropractic, and published literature on chiropractic's effectiveness.

The reports reveals that while all 50 states have health insurance mandates, only 37 states have mandated chiropractic services. The insurance mandates in these 37 states provide individuals with insurance coverage for chiropractic that companies and employers would otherwise not include.

The study points out that health insurance mandates are estimated to comprise 20 percent of health insurance outpayments, while the chiropractic mandates increase outpayments by less than one percent.

The current chiropractic patient population is estimated at 9-10 million, and is expected to double in the next few years.

Examining 22 studies and one inquiry (involving 14 states and two foreign countries), the Schifrin study concluded:

"By every test of cost and effectiveness, the general weight of evidence shows chiropractic to provide important therapeutic benefits at economical costs. Additionally, these benefits are achieved with apparently minimal, even negligible impacts on the costs of health insurance. The conclusion of this analysis is that chiropractic mandates help make available health care that is widely used by the American public and has proven to be cost effective."

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If you interested in getting a copy of either study you may contact:

*Virginia Chiropractic Association:*

*P.O Box 534*

*Richmond, VA 23204*

*Phone: (804) 353-8699*

or

**Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research (FCER) 66 Washington Ave. Des Moines, Iowa 50314 Phone: (800) 622-6309 (515) 282-7118**

The FCER is offering the studies for \$25 each or \$45 for both.



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