

Neck Pain Study Reinforces Use of Chiropractic, Other Conservative Options

Arlington, Va. — [A new study](#) published this month in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* finds spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) and exercise more effective at relieving neck pain than pain medication. The research reinforces the use of conservative care options as a first line of defense against pain, according to the American Chiropractic Association (ACA).

The study divided participants into three groups that received SMT from a doctor of chiropractic (DC), pain medication (over-the-counter pain relievers, narcotics and muscle relaxants) or exercise recommendations. After 12 weeks, about 57 percent of those who met with DCs and 48 percent who exercised reported at least a 75 percent reduction in pain, compared to 33 percent of the people in the medication group. After one year, approximately 53 percent of the drug-free groups still reported at least a 75 percent reduction in pain; compared to just 38 percent pain reduction among those who took medication.

The study also found that despite experiencing limited pain relief, people in the drug group continued using a higher amount of medication more frequently throughout the follow-up period. This finding underscores concerns raised in an April 2011 [government report](#) that indicated prescription drug abuse in the U.S. has reached crisis level.

“Doctors of chiropractic have long cautioned against the overuse of medication to treat musculoskeletal pain,” said ACA President Keith Overland, DC. “We continue to promote drug-free, conservative interventions for neck pain patients before referral for medical management that may result in side effects. Patients deserve to know that there are natural, drug-free options when it comes to pain relief.”

The American Chiropractic Association (ACA), based in Arlington, Va., is the largest professional association in the United States representing doctors of chiropractic. ACA promotes the highest standards of patient care and ethics, and supports research that contributes to the health and well-being of millions of chiropractic patients. Visit www.acatoday.org.