

# The Results of Integrating Chiropractors in a Primary Care Setting

## Did you know that....

- One in five Canadians suffer from chronic pain
- Chronic pain is associated with the worst quality of life as compared with other chronic diseases such as chronic lung or heart disease
- Chronic pain costs more than cancer, heart disease and HIV combined
- In Canada, chronic pain costs more than \$6 billion per year in productivity and job loss and \$37 billion per year in sick days

(Phillips and Schopflocher 2008; Schopflocher, Jovey et al. 2010)

*It's been great to have other options for our patients for management of low back pain. Patients that I have referred have found the chiropractors to be excellent and helpful. – JoAnn Vickers, Nurse Practitioner*

## What is the Low Back Pain Project?

The Ontario Chiropractic Association is interested in new ways that chiropractors can work together with primary care providers to meet the needs of their patients. In Cambridge and North Dumfries local chiropractors came together with Langs to propose a low back pain pilot project that was implemented in January 2014.

The volunteer clinic is made up of a group of 4 chiropractors that rotate shifts at the Langs Community Health Centre in 2 hour blocks of time 2 days per week. Patients are referred to the clinic by Langs primary care providers.

Patients are referred to the clinic and undergo an initial assessment and then are provided with a management plan. The chiropractors keep the treatments and any recommendations as consistent as possible.

## Evaluation Methodology

- Data were collected prospectively on consecutive patients over the first 2 years of the program
- Pre and post surveys were completed to collect data from January 2014 to January 2016
- The study also examined pain medication usage, and
- Other healthcare utilization rates (e.g. frequency of visits to primary care)

## Tools Used

- Bournemouth Questionnaire (BQ)
- Bothersomeness
- Global improvement scale
- Satisfaction with treatment scale
- EuroQol 5 Domain (EQ-5D)

## Baseline Characteristics

- n = 93 patients
- Mean age 49.0 (±16.27) years
- 66% unemployed
- 77% back pain > 1 month
- 68% constant back pain
- 63% taking pain medication daily

*"The chiropractic program at Langs has been incredibly well-received at the CHC. We undertook a 2-year service evaluation and found positive treatment outcomes and high patient satisfaction. Notably, a large majority of patients also reported a significant reduction in the use of pain medication. With the integration of such services there may be potential to reduce opioid usage among CHC patients. As such, further investigation of chiropractic integration into CHC and other primary care settings is warranted." – Dr. Peter Emary, Chiropractor and Research Clinician.*

## Achievements:

- Community Health Centre patients with no benefit coverage gained greater access to chiropractic services
- The burden on family physicians was reduced
- Inter-professional collaboration between primary care providers and chiropractors was achieved
- There is significant potential for health cost savings
- The program is a solution to help reduce opioid usage
- Majority reported improvement on BQ (63%), Bothersomeness (74%) and global improvement (93%) scales

*“I couldn’t afford to see a chiropractor and I really needed treatment to help with my back pain. The care the chiropractors provided at Langs was excellent. My pain is so much better, I decreased my need for medications and did not see my doctor as often because I finally got the help I needed. This care should be available everywhere.” – Pinderjit, Patient*

## Key Outcomes



**77%**

**DID NOT VISIT PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER WHILE UNDER CHIROPRACTIC CARE**



**93%**

**WERE SATISFIED WITH THE SERVICE**

**82%**

**REPORTED SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN PAIN MEDICATION**



*“I’ve had lower back problems all my life. I was originally going to a Chiropractor and paying but then I couldn’t afford it any longer so I had to stop going. Then I got referred to the chiropractors here at Langs, When I arrived at my first appointment I could hardly sit/stand or even get out of the car. I have been going to see them regularly since then and its changed my life! When I go they seem to know exactly where my problem is. If I miss going for treatment it’s not good for me. – Barbara, Patient*

### Feedback About the Program

*“This project provides an opportunity for our profession to work with clients we do not normally see in our practice.*

*– Dr. Amy Brown, Chiropractor*

*“The management of chronic back pain in primary care is a significant challenge. Chiropractors have a more sophisticated understanding of the back, anatomy and physiology and their input on refining diagnoses, and constructing management plans for patients has been so helpful. I see patients in pain daily and I’ve had limited resources to offer them until this project began. This is a much better option than prescribing opioids and this early investment in treatment is far more cost effective for the health care system. They have been a great addition to our primary care team.” – Siobhan Callaghan, Family Doctor, Langs CHC*

### Acknowledgments

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