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## **Chiropractic Protects an Aging Population From Loss of Function**

By Robert Reiss and Mark Studin | November 2014

It was reported by Weigel, Hockenberry, and Wolinsky (2014) that 4.1% to 5.4% of Americans ages 70 and older utilize chiropractic care. 6%-7% of Americans between ages 62 and 70 utilize chiropractic care, which is close to the national average. They go on to say that the activities of daily living (ADL's) facing an aging population are associated with every day mobility tasks such as walking, stooping, lifting, bending, reaching, carrying and all other forms of movement, as well as tasks associated with living independently, including cognitive functioning. Any spine-related problems that limit a person's ability to perform basic activities of daily living can decrease independence. With normal aging and accumulation of chronic diseases, including musculoskeletal spine-related pain, the risks for functional decline and loss of independence increase.

They also share that Medicare covers many treatment options for spine-related injuries like chiropractic adjustments and physical therapy which are non-invasive, as well as more invasive treatments like prescription narcotics, steroid injections and surgery. While the increase in more invasive and technologically intensive treatments has substantially grown over the past 15 to 20 years, the levels of improvement in outcomes and disability have not improved to the same degree.

An article by Foster, Phillips, Hamel, and Eisenberg (2000) concluded, "Thirty percent of Americans aged 65 and older reported using alternative medicine (amounting to 10 million Americans based on extrapolations to census data) and 19% visited an alternative medicine provider (making 63 million visits based on extrapolations to census data) within the past year. The two modalities used most commonly were chiropractic and herbs..." (p. 1560).

This study showed that those utilizing chiropractic experienced less functional decline in ADLs, such as lifting, stooping and walking several blocks and were less likely to rate their health as worsening compared with those who only received medical services. It also provided evidence that while overall Medicare spending on spine conditions has grown due to the more costly services and volume growth, spending on chiropractic was flat and declined as a percentage of total spending among those choosing chiropractic. Not only does chiropractic cost the system less and prevent the loss of function, but chiropractic users rate their satisfaction levels higher in regards to the explanation of their problems, as demonstrated by the examination findings and discussion of their ongoing progress.