Musculoskeletal (MSK) pain is a common problem faced by patients in Canada. There is a range of pain management and treatment options offered to patients, one of these being opioid therapy. A study of patients receiving long-term opioid therapy for non-cancer pain at the Pain Management Centre at Hamilton General Hospital found that 44.8% of the patients studied had presented with chronic low back pain (LBP). A 2014 systematic review and meta-analysis found that “opiod analogues provide modest short-term pain relief for people with chronic low back pain (LBP) who tolerate the medicine, but the effect is not likely to be clinically important within guideline-recommended doses.” This review challenged the commonly-held view that opioids are effective for chronic LBP, finding instead that they had minimal effects on pain even at high doses.6

18.2% of individuals seeking addiction treatment in Ontario in 2012–2013 listed prescription opioids as the presenting problem substance, up from 10.6% in 2005–2006.7

According to the Office of the Chief Coroner, 12.1% of all deaths in 2010 among those aged 25–34 years in Ontario were opioid-related, an increase from 5.5% in 2001.8

As concern about adverse effects and the potential for prescription opioid abuse rises, many health practitioners are turning to pain relief options that do not care for these risks. Chiropractic care can be a part of the answer for MSK chronic pain management.9

A 2016 study of American recipients of Medicare found that regional usage rates of chiropractic services and opioids were inversely correlated. The study recommended a trial of chiropractic manual therapy as an initial treatment for patients with back or neck pain.10

A 2013 case study of a chiropractic-medical collaboration in a Family Health Team found that narcotics were prescribed to 14% of patients who were referred for chiropractic care compared to 43% of patients who were not referred. Further, patients referred for chiropractic care had 25% fewer patients visiting and images requests than those who were not.2

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References


For more information on the role chiropractors can play to support MSK care, please visit: www.chiropractic.on.ca/research-policy/