



Backgrounder

Partnering in Primary Care: Attitudes of Ontario Physicians Toward Multidisciplinary Models of Care

Introduction

Twenty one percent of patients who consult a physician have a low back problem, with low back pain being a major cause of disability and healthcare expenditure in Ontario. These costs are largely due to high use of diagnostic services such as MRIs and x-rays and high referrals to specialists (orthopedic surgeons and neurosurgeons), however, research shows approximately 90 per cent of patients are not surgical candidatesⁱ and many lower back MRIs do not provide useful diagnostic informationⁱⁱ. This is not an effective use of healthcare dollars.

To highlight solutions to ease this burden on the healthcare system and give patients better care, the Ontario Chiropractic Association, in partnership with Environics Research Group, surveyed general practitioners and family physicians from Ontario to find out their attitudes towards using other healthcare providers, including chiropractors, as part of a multidisciplinary team to provide care in the area of low back pain management. Below is a snapshot of the findings.

Key research findings

- Low back pain is a common complaint for Ontarians, and physicians admit they could use help treating these patients:
 - Almost half (47 per cent) of physicians say they frequently treat patients with low back pain;
 - More than half (55 per cent) of family physicians admit they find it challenging to treat patients with low back pain on their own.
- Family physicians support multidisciplinary care, particularly for managing patients with low back pain:
 - Six in ten (59 per cent) family physicians think multidisciplinary care is the way of the future for primary care;
 - 78 per cent of family physicians said they are open to using a roster of allied healthcare professionals with an expertise in low back pain care.
- Multidisciplinary care means better care for Ontarians with low back pain:
 - 67 per cent think patients with low back pain would be better served using multidisciplinary models of care;
 - 75 per cent of family physicians say they think their low back pain patients could benefit from treatment options offered by other health care professionals.

- Family physicians support chiropractic as part of the multidisciplinary primary care team:
 - More than half (51 per cent) of family physicians say they believe chiropractic can help patients with low back pain;

Methodology

The survey was completed online from April 26, 2012 to May 7, 2012 using Environics Research Group's online physician panel. A total of 100 general practitioners / family physicians from Ontario participated in the survey. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of ± 9.76 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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ⁱ K, Jaakkimainen L, et al. Investigation of acute lower back pain in Ontario: Are guidelines being followed? ICES, Toronto, Ontario, 2004.

ⁱⁱ . Kim JSM, Dong JZ, Brener S, Coyte PC, Rampersaud YR. Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of a Reduction in Diagnostic Imaging in Degenerative Spinal Disorders. *Healthcare Policy*. 2011; 7(2): e105