



THE CANADIAN CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION

Presentation to the Standing Committee on Health

Mindful collaboration in Healthcare: In Praise of Active Healthy Living and Encouraging Canadians to Take Charge of their Health

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Executive Summary

Three variables are missing for meaningful healthcare system reform toward a model which emphasizes healthy living:

- incentives to individuals to make decisions and short term efforts for long-term health benefits,
- incentives to encourage healthcare providers to focus on public health, and
- incentives to encourage, really encourage, healthcare providers to work together.

Addressing these would have a profound, beneficial effect on healthcare and would help resolve health funding issues in Canada.

The Canadian Chiropractic Association

The Canadian Chiropractic Association (The CCA) is a federated association representing the interests of the chiropractic profession in Canada through the co-operation and co-ordination of information and programming among its provincial divisions. All 10 provinces plus the Yukon are represented and through them, The CCA has a membership of approximately 6,500 chiropractors which represents 85% of the number of licensed practitioners in Canada. The mission of The CCA is to help Canadians live healthier lives by informing the public about the benefits of chiropractic care, by facilitating chiropractic research, and by advocating for health care system reform to ensure equitable and accessible health care for all Canadians.

The Funding Solution

The funding solution isn't a solution, at least not by itself. In Canada we are treated daily to news of how an increasingly larger slice of public funds is being taken up by health care costs.

Healthcare in Canada is delivered through a publicly funded system, which covers all "medically necessary" hospital and physician care and curbs the role of private medicine. It ate up about 40 percent of provincial budgets or some C\$183 billion ... last year.¹

We feel that the notion of spending more money will not lead to healthier populations. We need to spend smarter not more. We may even be able to spend less for greater public good.

Three things are missing in the formula for meaningful healthcare system reform toward a model which emphasizes healthy living:

- incentives to individuals to make decisions and short term efforts for long-term health benefits,
- incentives to encourage healthcare providers to focus on public health, and
- incentives to encourage, really encourage, healthcare providers to work together.

Let us consider briefly the three incentives:

Incentives to individuals to make decisions and short term efforts for long-term health benefits

What are the incentives to individuals? Clearly, existing incentives are not working. Junk food is cheap and easy to buy. Nutritious foods are more bother. Fast foods are easily accessible. Comfortable couches and elaborate home entertainment systems are more seductive and enticing than going out for a walk or working out. What types of incentives could motivate the population toward healthier eating? Clearly junk food should cost as much as health food or healthy food should be as cheap as junk. There are no obvious health benefits to drinking sugared waters; however, they are inexpensive and convenient. Unless the formula is altered, they will continue to be consumed in vast quantities.

How about the cost of being sick from a poor diet? There are often no immediate consequences but the long term consequences for the individual and the health care system are increasingly onerous. What if there were immediate economic benefits to staying well and negative economic consequences to leading an unhealthy life? Could we make preventative health treatments, fitness classes and health activity more

¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/05/31/us-health-idUSTRE64U3XO20100531>

attractive while making reckless health behavior less attractive? As a case in point, in most provinces in Canada it is easier and cheaper for a people of limited means to get expensive and invasive back surgery than it is for them to arrest the problem with a series of simple spinal adjustments.

Incentives to encourage healthcare providers to focus on public health

Public health needs more support from all sectors. A glance at the devastating effect of the misalignment of resources on acute care reveals the following. Over half of Canadians live with a chronic disease; and chronic diseases are expensive.

In 2005 they cost the economy 77 billion dollars – almost half of the annual cost of illness in Canada. The majority of Canadians (65%) have at least one factor that puts them at risk for chronic disease and many Canadians have more than one. Smoking, unhealthy eating habits, obesity, and physical inactivity are the main behavioral risk factors leading to many chronic diseases.²

Clearly all healthcare providers who can reasonably do so must help wage the war against chronic disease by engaging in those activities which encourage health and well-being.

Public health also embraces injury prevention. While injury prevention per se is not the main focus of the Health Committee it is certainly inextricably linked to healthy active living. Safety must be part of the overall drive to encourage increased activity levels in the population. As we will show below, the Canadian Chiropractic profession has put significant emphasis on public education programs that are focused on healthy living practices which are also safe.

Incentives to encourage, really encourage, healthcare providers to work together.

Our profession sees a great deal of wasted time and needless suffering in the current silo system of healthcare. When various granting agencies provide support for health research in collaboration across the professions there is very little evidence that they insist upon a collaborative model of health care. When funds are transferred to provinces or territories, are there even suggestions that these be used efficiently with maximum value in mind? Could Ottawa be tempted to establish high priority projects where the best of care was available without barriers? We contend that pressure on public funding could be lessened if our profession was efficiently deployed to deal with neuromusculoskeletal issues as they occur. And there is ample evidence for cost saving.³

² Canadian Coalition for Public Health for the 21st Century, Chronic Disease- A Public Health Issue. http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/policy/ccph21/facts_chronic_e.pdf

³ Haldeman S, Carroll LJ, Cassidy JD, and the Scientific Secretariat. [The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010 Task Force on Neck Pain and its Associated Disorders. Executive Summary](#). The Spine Journal, Volume 33 (4S) Supplement to February 15, 2008.

The CCA and Healthy Living Education for the Public

Historically, at its core, the chiropractic profession has embraced its role as health promoters and champions in healthy living. By engaging patients as active partners in managing their own health outcomes, chiropractors aim at improving overall function and wellbeing. Consequently, the adoption of healthy living approaches by patients helps them to achieve greater capacity. The average chiropractor spends a considerable amount of time identifying and managing capacity issues at their early stages. As chiropractors, we can assist our overworked fellow healthcare providers in acute care by promoting health and prevention in the framework of our patient plan of management.

The CCA's initiatives are founded on chiropractic's strength to implement such strategies. Our recent programs have included *Fit-in 15* which encourages Canadian of every age and fitness level to devote 15 minutes a day to physical activity. Recognizing the aging population, The CCA has produced *Best Foot Forward*, program targeted for seniors to reduce falls and their associated negative outcomes. An initiative of The CCA and its provincial division, in conjunction with Chatelaine Magazine, has produced the *Chatelaine Back Health Promotion* both in print and online. In addition, our provincial divisions have also developed a number of creative public health initiatives such as British-Columbia's *WorkSafe*, Alberta's *Bad Back*, Ontario's *Lift Light, Shovel Right*, Quebec's *Santé-Mania*, Newfoundland's *Straighten Up* and so forth. Canadian Chiropractors are involved, on a daily basis, in widespread activities to promote healthy living to our patients and Canadians in general.

Our efforts certainly do not stand alone, but rather are implemented in a collaborative framework with other health care professions which encourage the creation of public policies that reflect our vision of health promotion in Canada. The CCA has partnered with Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century, ThinkFirst, Osteoporosis Canada, etc. on a number of innovative projects. Moreover, the chiropractic profession has fostered and supported team-based clinical affiliations notably at the National Spine Care Clinic in Calgary, St. Michael's in Toronto, the Mount Carmel Clinic in Winnipeg and the Rosedale Medical Clinic in Hamilton. Patients benefit when healthcare providers are grouped to offer the best practices available. These examples have clearly demonstrated the increase in patient satisfaction with care when providers collaborate synergistically.

DeNoon D. [Chiropractic Care May Reduce Surgeries, X-rays](#) WebMD Medical News, October 12, 2004.

Legorreta AP, Metz RD, Nelson CF, Ray S, Chernicoff HO, DiNubile NA [Comparative Analysis of Individuals With and Without Chiropractic Coverage](#): Patient Characteristics, Utilization, and Costs Arch Intern Med. 2004;164:1985-1992.

<http://www.chiropracticcanada.ca/ecms.ashx/PDF/ResearchLibrary/Manitoba.pdf>

<http://www.chiropracticcanada.ca/ecms.ashx/PDF/ResearchLibrary/WCIBReport.pdf>

The promotion of healthy lifestyles is an important objective of chiropractic care. In this regard, chiropractors are trained to provide dietary, nutritional, lifestyle and therapeutic exercise counseling to address specific patient complaints and to enhance overall health. As primary contact healthcare providers, the chiropractic profession supports public health promotion and prevention strategies that encourage physical and mental health and well-being.

Some of our recent programs, as mentioned above, are as follows:

Fit-in 15

Fit-in 15, a free online program which can be used by anyone who has internet access is designed to give Canadians simple choices of exercises that will put them on the path to fitting fitness activities into their lifestyle. The *Fit-in 15* program has been as an easy and manageable way to start to introduce the habit of daily physical activity.⁴

Chatelaine Back Health Tips

Back Health: Advice from Canada's Chiropractors is a micro-site on Chatelaine.com dedicated to helping women care for their backs through all stages of life. This online public education program offers seasonally relevant tips on back care and how to prevent back injury. There are a wide range of topics including gardening, backpack safety and snow shoveling safely.⁵

Best Foot Forward

One in every three Canadians over age 65 will fall at least once in a year. *Best Foot Forward* is a public education program developed by the CCA to address the issue of debilitating falls among older Canadians. Canada's chiropractors are committed to reducing injury and disability from falls. The *Best Foot Forward* program covers four main prevention areas: household hazards; personal health; strength and balance; and risky behaviors.⁶

Nunavut Demonstration Project

The CCA, in association with the local government and community, supports the provision of chiropractic services to Nunavut residents, in an effort to move their health status closer to that of the general Canadian population. The proposed project will benefit the people of Nunavut by offering an alternative, hands on form of health care and treatment for neuromusculoskeletal complaints.

⁴ <http://www.fitin15.ca/>

⁵ <http://site.chatelaine.com/backhealth/feb2011/index.aspx>

⁶ <http://www.chiropracticcanada.ca/en-us/HealthWellness/PublicEducation/Falls%20Prevention.aspx>

As an example of our potential for community engagement, The CCA was recently approached by ThinkFirst, a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of brain and spinal cord injuries, on collaborating on the implementation of injury prevention strategies for elementary children in the North. Subsequently, the idea of implementing the national Brain Day project for children in Nunavut schools was agreed upon, including adapting the injury prevention materials to the Inuit population served.

Conclusion

The Canadian Chiropractic Association recommends that dealing with the present and growing crises in healthcare be based on a public health/ prevention/wellness model where there are incentives implemented which cause stakeholders and individuals to assume a greater degree of responsibility for healthcare outcomes.