THE GROWING ROLE
of Doctors of Chiropractic in
ON-SITE CORPORATE HEALTH CLINICS
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Originally conceived by large employers at least 70 years ago1 as a center for treating work-related injuries, adding a benefit for high-wage employees, or minimizing employees’ time away from work,2 on-site corporate health clinics have evolved into a new and expanded model. Today, these clinics reflect post-health care reforms and address a myriad of challenges: control and reduce health care costs, enhance access to primary care, and function as a medical home for employees and their dependents.

Employers increasingly consider on-site corporate health clinics as a vital component of corporate health and wellness strategies that aim to measurably improve employee productivity, integrate wellness initiatives, and provide an employment benefit comparable to other employers. In some cases, these clinics result in better control of corporate health care expenditures through on-site screening for chronic diseases and active condition management.

That’s a tall order for any health care delivery model, but one that continues to earn market confidence. In 2009, Fuld & Co., a research organization, predicted that the number of corporate on-site health clinics would swell to 7,000 by 2015, and would serve about 10 percent of the U.S. population under age 65.3 Several organizations tracking this trend, as well as the ever-increasing scope of services offered, have provided key statistics:

1. National Business Group on Health shared in a 2013 survey that 44 percent of large employers have on-site corporate health clinics, and nine percent were considering the introduction of one.4

2. Mercer’s (New York) most recent National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans, released in November 2012, indicated 37 percent of firms with 5,000 or more employees reported they offer occupational and/or primary care services through an on-site corporate health clinic, compared with 32 percent in 2010. Another 15 percent indicated they are considering installing a clinic within the next two years.

3. On-site corporate health clinics were slightly less popular with mid-size employers. About 30 percent of employers with > 500 employees said they currently offer on-site services, while nine percent said they may begin offering on-site occupational health services, and 15 percent said they are considering offering primary health care services by 2014.

4. The National Association of Worksite Health Centers (www.nawhc.org), the nation’s only non-profit association supporting employer sponsors of on-site, near-site, mobile health, fitness and wellness centers, studied U.S. employers during the period of Nov. 2013-March 2014. There were 275 total responses: 116 of respondents were employers indicating that they had an on-site or near-site clinic. Results are shown for those with <1000 employees, 1,001-10,000, and >10,000 employees:

EMPLOYER ADOPTION OF ON-SITE CLINICS

According to Katelyn Johnson, Integrated Health Manager, Cisco, “At Cisco’s LifeConnections’ Health Center, having doctors of chiropractic working closely with the medical team has helped reduce our musculoskeletal spend, and patients consistently give high patient satisfaction scores. The integrated care team of chiropractors, acupuncturists, and physical therapists is critical to achieving our Patient Centered Medical Home model.”


As this delivery model gains momentum, there is increased focus and demand for offering services that effectively address conditions that are both prevalent and costly. Topping the charts as one of the most pressing health care challenges nationwide is Low Back Pain (LBP). Listed as the second most common symptom-related reason for clinic visits in the U.S., LBP affects up to 84 percent of adults at some time in their lives. Regardless of the job description, LBP is problematic in the workplace, plaguing both white-collar desk personnel and blue-collar warehouse and manufacturing workers.

When asked about four common types of pain, respondents of a National Institute of Health Statistics survey indicated that LBP was the most common (27 percent), followed by severe headache or migraine pain (15 percent), neck pain (15 percent) and facial ache or pain (4 percent). Employers take notice of these figures and are concerned about lost productivity as a result of pain. Data from the American Productivity Audit was used to estimate lost productive time resulting from headache, arthritis, LBP and other musculoskeletal conditions expressed in hours per worker per week and calculated in U.S. dollars. Over half (52.7 percent) of the workforce surveyed had headache, LBP, arthritis or other musculoskeletal pain in the past two weeks, and 12.7 percent of all workforce lost productive time in a two-week period due to pain.

• Headache (5.4 percent) was the most common pain condition prompting lost productive time, followed by LBP (3.2 percent), arthritis (2 percent) and other musculoskeletal (2 percent).
• Workers lost an average of 4.6 hours per week of productive time due to a pain condition, with other musculoskeletal pain (5.5 hours/week) and arthritis or LBP (5.2 hours/week) producing the largest amounts of lost productive time.
• Lost productive time from common painful conditions was estimated to be $61.2 billion per year, while 76.6 percent of lost time was attributed to reduced work performance, not absenteeism.

Back pain is expensive: the economic burden of LBP is immense and appears to be growing. The February 2010 issue of Archives of Internal Medicine reported that the direct costs of treatment for LBP in the U.S. are over $50 billion a year - more than half the amount spent per year on cancer treatment. Individuals who experience LBP often suffer the loss of productivity and income, along with the expenses associated with medical, rehabilitation and surgical intervention. In the workplace, LBP comes in second only to upper respiratory conditions as stated cause for loss of work.  

Given these statistics, it’s not surprising that more and more employers are effectively addressing LBP and neuro-musculoskeletal conditions by adding chiropractic care to their portfolio of services offered at on-site corporate health clinics.

Doctors of Chiropractic (DC) are well trained and positioned as the first option for drug-free, non-invasive, evidence-based and effective back and general neuro-musculoskeletal pain management. In fact, findings published in a 2012 issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine suggest that chiropractic services offered at on-site corporate health clinics, versus off-site physical therapy, might promote lower utilization of certain costly health care services, while improving neuro-musculoskeletal function. Additionally, chiropractic patients often have a more conservative, less invasive treatment profile, which can significantly reduce the overall cost of treatment.

ROLE OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE IN ON-SITE CORPORATE HEALTH CLINICS

The evolved model of the on-site corporate health clinic streamlines employee health care by offering advantageous services, including: adult medicine, pediatrics, OB-GYN, geriatrics, specialty services, pharmacy services, physical and other therapies, lab services, wellness programs, health coaching, EAP, chiropractic, acupuncture and massage services. Including chiropractic to the on-site corporate health clinic service portfolio has become increasingly popular among employers based on the favorable outcomes-based research connected to chiropractic and the apparent prevalence and high costs associated with LBP. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), neuro-musculoskeletal conditions are prevalent and their impact is pervasive, as they are the most common cause of severe long-term pain and physical disability.

A report published in September 2014, “Impact of Chiropractic Services at an On-Site Health Center,” found that on-site chiropractic services are associated with lower overall health care utilization and subsequent costs. In particular, on-site chiropractic services were connected with:


lower utilization of radiology services
lower utilization of outpatient and emergency settings
lower utilization of physical therapy

The overall findings of this study suggest that chiropractic services offered at on-site corporate health clinics might promote lower utilization of certain health care services, while improving neuro-musculoskeletal function. Additionally, patients who receive chiropractic treatment often have a more conservative, less invasive treatment profile, which can significantly reduce the overall cost of treatment.

DOCTORS OF CHIROPRACTIC ON-THE-JOB

Doctors of chiropractic can be integrated within the on-site corporate health clinic in a variety of ways, ranging from part-time to full-time practitioners to executive positions tasked with leading key internal departments.

To demonstrate the variety of integration arrangements, as well as the range of advantages associated with chiropractic, a panel of doctors of chiropractic with varying levels of involvement and experience at on-site corporate health clinics has been surveyed:

**Blake Howard, DC, Clinic Chiropractor - Take Care Health Center**

Dr. Howard is a member of the multidisciplinary team—which also includes medical doctors, a physician assistant, physical therapist and naturopathic practitioner—serving more than 5,000 employees.

Dr. Howard says, “I treat approximately 45 percent of the patients who present with a musculoskeletal complaint.”

**Curt Krause, DC, Clinic Chiropractor - Healthe Clinic, Cerner Corporation**

Dr. Krause is a full-time employee of the on-site, multidisciplinary medical clinic. The Healthe Clinic staff also includes board-certified medical doctors, nurse practitioners, licensed clinical social workers, nutritionists and health coaches.

After each visit to the clinic, Cerner employees are asked to complete a satisfaction survey about their treatment experience.

According to Dr. Krause, “My care [chiropractic] and the care of the clinic has consistently been rated 4.8-4.9 out of 5.”

**Daniel Lord, DC, Director of Chiropractic Services - Facebook**

Dr. Lord joined the Facebook clinic as a full-time employee.

At the Facebook health clinic, chiropractic is a very popular service that employees are enthusiastically using for their health care needs.

In fact, all health clinic patients who present any type of musculoskeletal condition are directed first to Dr. Lord. The demand for Dr. Lord’s services has grown so rapidly that his treatment space continues to expand to accommodate his patient load.

**Mindy Mar, DC, Chiropractor & Physical Rehabilitation Specialist - ViaSat**

In 2013, Dr. Mar was brought on to oversee the chiropractic and physical medicine department at ViaSat’s on-site corporate wellness center via Cerner Corporation.

“I work with a multidisciplinary team to care for over 1,400 employees and their dependents.”

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William Updyke, DC, Leader, Physical and Complementary Medicine - LifeConnections Health Center - Cisco

Dr. Updyke cares for patients on a daily basis, as well as manages the acupuncture, physical therapy and other chiropractic staff. They have a highly integrated clinic between his team, the medical providers and the clinic’s health coach and EAP provider.

“Chiropractic happens to be the ideal service because for many companies musculoskeletal complaints are the number one reason for going to a health care provider. And, with the growing wellness trend, chiropractic is the right fit for employers wanting to help their employees stay healthy.”

Based upon the experiences of the panel, two conclusions can be drawn: 1) on-site chiropractic services offer many advantages to both the employer and employees; 2) there is not a one-size-fits-all approach for chiropractic integration, and many approaches can serve beneficial based on the corporation’s vision.

A CLOSER LOOK AT ON-SITE CHIROPRACTIC

CASE STUDY: STANDARD PROCESS

The advantages of including chiropractic care within the service portfolio of an on-site corporate health clinic span well beyond financial considerations to include favorable patient satisfaction scores and clinical outcomes. One company that can attest this claim is Standard Process Inc. (SP), a Wisconsin-based manufacturer of whole food supplements, which has uniquely positioned doctors of chiropractic at the helm of its on-site corporate health clinic.

Beginning in 1998 as a walking program for SP employees, the popular initiative gradually evolved into a broad-based, on-site corporate health clinic, based on four staple offerings:

- Chiropractic care
- Nutritional care
- Physical activity
- Education

Following 10 years of efficient operation, SP published an authoritative report revealing statistically -- and clinically -- significant differences in employee health factors and the reduction of long-term health risks, along with reduced company costs. As a result of its on-site corporate health clinic, the following outcomes were achieved:

- 60 percent of employees in the program had perfect work attendance, helping to provide stability to the growing company
- 24 percent decrease in participating employee short-term disability costs
- 12 percent decrease per participant in hospital, procedural and drug costs
- Employee turnover rate, over the course of 10 years, reduced to less than three percent
- Injury rates across the company are consistently among best-in-class

“Our 10-year study on employee wellness demonstrates that when given the right tools, engaged employees can make a significant difference in a company’s health care costs,” says Kevin Setnes, health and wellness manager at Standard Process.

The SP model is award-winning:

- 2013 Platinum; 2007 Gold: “The Well Workplace Award” by The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) recognized SP as one of Wisconsin’s healthiest workplaces
- 2013: “Top Workplace” in Southeastern Wisconsin by Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
- 2009; 2010: “The Governor’s Worksite Wellness Award” by the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Health recognized SP for its model to control health care costs, while providing the opportunity for its workforce to be healthier, happier and more productive

“There is an art and science to designing a results-oriented workplace wellness program,” commented David Hunnicutt, Ph.D., president of WELCOA. “Standard Process has mastered this art and science by demonstrating its program has advanced employee health, reduced health care costs, and improved productivity and morale.”

For more information about the SP on-site corporate health clinic or Cultivate, please email: info@cultivateonsite.com or call: 855-295-4535.
CHIROPRACTIC CARE DELIVERS VALUE

Chiropractic is defined as a "health care profession that focuses on disorders of the neuro-musculoskeletal system and nervous system, and the effects of these disorders on general health." While spinal manipulation is a large portion of chiropractic, doctors of chiropractic deliver >94 percent of manipulations in the U.S., doctors of chiropractic also provide a substantial amount of other care and counsel to patients. Modalities such as heat, cold, electrical stimulation, lasers, soft tissue techniques and full rehabilitation of injuries or pain syndromes are commonplace in chiropractic practice. Therapeutic exercises and fitness recommendations are usually made to patients, and many receive advice about nutrition, vitamins, weight loss, smoking cessation and relaxation techniques.

According to a 2005 survey by Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts, just over 83 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of chiropractic care they received. Factors that contributed to high satisfaction levels included, "whether the doctor of chiropractic orders and interprets laboratory tests, whether the doctor of chiropractic displays concern about patient's overall health, and the extent to which the doctor of chiropractic explains the condition and the treatment." Patient satisfaction is an important consideration for on-site corporate health clinics because a primary goal is to meet employee expectations for care that will enable a more rapid return to work.

Several studies confirm the effectiveness of chiropractic care:

- A 2010 study performed on Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee's fully insured population found that after risk adjusting each patient's costs, episodes of care initiated with a doctor of chiropractic were 20 percent less expensive than episodes initiated with an MD.

- A 2009 report stated, "When considering effectiveness and cost together, chiropractic care for low back and neck pain is highly cost-effective, [and] represents a good value in comparison to medical physician care."

- According to a 2004 article, spinal manipulative care for both chronic and acute LBP was more effective and provided more short-term relief than many other types of care, including prescription drugs, physical therapy and home exercise.

- In 2007, the American College of Physicians (ACP) and the American Pain Society (APS) released guidelines for LBP that recognized spinal manipulation to be a proven benefit for acute, sub-acute and chronic cases. These guidelines established spinal manipulation as the only non-pharmacologic approach endorsed for both acute and chronic LBP.

The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) recognizes the value connected with the utilization of conservative care first, and has adopted clinical guidelines to better manage spine-related conditions. This approach requires all surgical candidates to have tried and failed three months of conservative care, including chiropractic care, physical therapy and medication, prior to invasive procedures.

A 2012 report in the prestigious medical journal Spine, "Early Predictors of Lumbar Spine Surgery after Occupational Back Injury: Results from a Prospective Study of Workers in Washington State," further documents chiropractic care as a first option for back pain relief and surgical avoidance. The study observed reduced odds of surgery for those under age 35, women, Hispanics and those whose first provider was a chiropractor. In total, 42.7 percent of workers who initially visited a surgeon underwent surgery, in contrast to only 1.5 percent of those who first consulted a doctor of chiropractic.

An additional study finding similar outcomes, "Health Maintenance Care in Work-Related Low Back Pain and Its Association with Disability Recurrence," examined chiropractic care for occupational back injuries. For work-related nonspecific LBP, the study reported that chiropractic care was associated with a lower disability recurrence, when compared to treatment by other medical interventions. Overall, chiropractic patients showed better outcomes, less use of opioids, and had fewer surgeries, with lower expenses.


COST SAVINGS

According to a 2013 report, in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, “Tracking Low Back Problems in a Major Self-Insured Workforce: Toward Improvement in the Patient’s Journey,” chiropractic care presents greater opportunity for better cost management of LBP. The study assessed the cost outcomes -- direct (medical, pharmaceutical) and indirect (lost productivity, absenteeism, workers compensation, short and long-term disability) -- of treatment approaches to care for back problems in a major self-insured workforce, using published guidelines to focus on LBP. The analysis identified five treatment approaches based on the first six weeks of claims, and used published guidelines to focus on the 10,406 LBP episodes reported across the nine-year study period.

Of the five approaches, which ranged from Complex Medical Management to Information and Advice, employee patients in the Chiropractic group were the least likely to use any of the five most frequently prescribed classes of medications, receive medically intensive procedures such as surgeries, and record guideline-incongruent use of imaging, medications and procedures when the latter were delivered. Those within the Chiropractic group also averaged significantly lower total costs per episode, even when statistical adjustments were made to improve group comparability.28

CONCLUSION

On-site corporate health clinics are evolving to meet the specific needs of employers of all sizes and industries. In fact, experts predict that they will continue to gain popularity and grow by 15-20 percent each year.29

As a growing number of employers add chiropractic care to the service portfolio, they will strengthen the opportunity for cost savings, improved outcomes and worker productivity. According to William Updyke, DC, employers are wise to hire the right mix of providers – ones that generate positive patient outcomes and high satisfaction, while meeting monetary allowances for corporate health care.30

Current research suggests that chiropractic care offers an evidence-based, cost-effective approach for the treatment of common troublesome health care concerns, including LBP. Furthermore, a collection of industry surveys confirms that high levels of patient satisfaction are associated with chiropractic care. According to a study published in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, chiropractic patients with chronic LBP displayed greater improvement and satisfaction at the one-month marker than those treated by family physicians. Additionally, a greater number of chiropractic patients (56 percent vs. 13 percent) reported that their LBP was better or much better.31

Looking ahead, the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress projects that chiropractic care will likely become a universally accepted and highly appreciated service offered at on-site corporate health clinics.


30Updyke, W.F., Integrating Complementary and Alternative Providers at an Onsite Clinic. [PDF Document].

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