

# Holistic approach



Chiropractic referrals from primary care physicians on the rise

Cheryl Hentz

**B**ack, neck and joint pain and the problems associated with them represent some of the fastest growing medical conditions in the United States today. The public is spending millions of dollars on drug therapies to help themselves feel better — some with little or no relief. As a result, more patients than ever, especially those who are health-conscious and wanting to try more of a holistic approach to treatment, are consulting with alternative practitioners, one of which is chiropractors.

According to the American Chiropractic Association, health care consumers are turning in record numbers to chiropractic care — a form of health care aimed primarily at enhancing a patient's overall health and well-being without the use of drugs

or surgery. More than 30 million people visited doctors of chiropractic last year for a variety of conditions, and more and more medical doctors are referring their patients to doctors of chiropractic. According to Mayo Clinic's Web site, as many as half of U.S. doctors currently refer patients to practitioners like chiropractors, who can either provide treatment that will complement their own or which will serve as an alternative to traditional treatment.

Dr. Jack Anderson, an internist with ThedaCare whose practice is mostly in geriatrics, has been referring patients for chiropractic treatment for about 20 years, long before it became somewhat commonplace.

"There are many patients that do not have a surgical pres-

*Peter Schubbe of Schubbe Resch Chiropractic and Physical Therapy Centers, pictured, evaluates and treats patients with musculoskeletal conditions by reducing pain and restoring mobility. Photo courtesy Schubbe Resch Chiropractic*

entation such as a nerve root that's trapped or a herniated disk where surgery is not indicated and yet anti-inflammatory byproducts just don't do the job," he says. "So with careful manipulation and some of the other options that chiropractors have, (it) is enough to get rid of a fair amount of the pain that many patients have."

Dr. Peter Schubbe of Schubbe Resch Chiropractic, which works closely with Anderson and many of his patients, says the trend of doctors referring to chiropractors started about 10 years ago and has been improving gradually since then. He sees a few reasons why more referrals are coming from the traditional practitioners.

First, he thinks the referring doctors now see chiropractors as specialists, similar to other specialists in the field of medicine.

"I think they're of the opinion that if we're really going to do what is best for the patient we need to work with people who are competent in their individual fields," he says. "Second, the education for chiropractors has significantly improved over the last 10 to 20 years and the quality of chiropractors coming out is much higher — and physicians are seeing that."

Further, Schubbe says, patient satisfaction surveys and other studies show patients recognize they are receiving benefits from chiropractic care.

"Chiropractic is always way up there — in the 90th percentile — on almost every-

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**DR. JACK ANDERSON  
INTERNIST WITH THEDACARE**

thing," he says. "I think society is seeing that chiropractic really does have something to offer, it does help people and more people are going. It doesn't help everybody, of course, but for the most part it works, it works very well, it's safe and it's very effective. And as people start using it more, many of the other people who haven't used it are starting to think maybe they should check it out, too."

Dr. Michael Hamilton, who co-owns Planet Chiropractic in the Howard/Green Bay area, has not seen as much of an increase in referrals from doctors as Schubbe has, but says it has improved nonetheless. He also agrees that patient satisfaction surveys help a great deal, especially in convincing patients that chiropractic can help.

"The more testimonials people see out there, the more they tend to believe. They don't necessarily believe a chiropractor telling them they can make

them feel better, but when they hear their friends talk about it and so forth, that can definitely help a lot," Hamilton says, adding that far too many doctors still prefer to treat certain conditions with pills. "Medicine is for emergencies," Hamilton says.

While that may be so, there is still plenty of room for traditional practitioners and alternative providers, like chiropractors, to work together, Anderson says. But there are guidelines that should be followed.

"When doctors of different specialties are treating a mutual patient, it's important that they have a basic understanding of what each other is doing," Anderson says. "It's also important that any chiropractor a physician works with understands their limits and boundaries and doesn't try to go outside of the accepted chiropractic care and physical therapy and so forth."

Schubbe believes there is a definite need for both kinds of treatment — holistic and traditional — depending on the patient and his or her needs.

"The procedure is never more important than the patient," says Schubbe. "That's one of our mottos. If we all keep in mind that the number one goal is the patient, and treat those areas that we specialize in, then everybody who does good work can be accepted as part of the healing profession and the patient will realize the maximum benefit." **M<sub>p</sub>**