

Chiropractic care

IT was disappointing to read a recent article, "Our cash wasted on unproven medicine" (*The Advertiser* 25/6/09), which supplied inaccurate information concerning chiropractic care and its inclusion under Medicare's Enhanced Primary Care Program (EPC).

It is surprising that the article – which mentions the need for "proper scientific analysis" – does not justify any of its claims regarding "unproven treatments" and "wasted" taxpayer money with such scientific approach.

According to Professor Morrison, "Medicare (is) funding treatments from chiropractors that 'don't really pass muster'".

Further, in the article, Australian Medical Association (SA) president Dr Andrew Lavender said "governments 'placated' some alternative therapies and their clients by subsidising some therapies".

First, EPC Medicare scheme referrals have shown substantial growth.

Since its expansion in 2004, the EPC has provided GPs, other referrers and patients with an increased level of choice and access to chiropractic care. A recent article in the *Journal of Complementary Medicine* outlined "the substantial growth in the number of chiropractic and osteopathy EPC items, at around 80 per cent a year".

Second, the notion that taxpayer money is being "wasted" ignores the literature supporting the cost-effectiveness of chiropractic care. A 2004 study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that compared with doctor-only health plans, chiropractic care cut the cost of treating back pain by 28 per cent; reduced hospitalisations among back pain patients by 41 per cent; reduced back surgeries by 32 per cent; and reduced the cost of medical imaging, such as X-rays or MRIs, by 37 per cent.

Third, according to the most recent National Health Survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, more than 215,000 Australians visit a chiropractor each week. Today, chiropractic receives wide public acceptance and is considered a part of mainstream health care.

Fourth, a strong body of literature exists supporting the effectiveness of chiropractic care, particularly for the care of lower back pain, neck pain and headaches.

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