American Chiropractic Association

News Release

Media Contact:

Amanda Donohue
adonohue@acatoday.org
phone: (703) 812¬-0209

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Chiropractors Offer Alternative to NSAIDs for Back Pain

Arlington, Va.-- People suffering from back pain should consider first trying chiropractic services and other non-drug therapies in light of a new research review that found common over-the-counter and prescription pain medications have limited effectiveness for back pain and raise the risk of side-effects, according to the American Chiropractic Association (ACA).

The review, published this month in Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, examined 35 randomized, placebo-controlled trials, encompassing 6,000 patients, to determine the effectiveness and safety of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for spinal pain. The authors of the report found that NSAIDs provided "clinically unimportant effects" when compared with patients who received only a placebo. Meanwhile, those who used NSAIDs had a 2.5 times greater risk of experiencing gastrointestinal disorders.

"At present, there are no simple analgesics that provide clinically important effects for spinal pain over placebo," the authors noted.

The news about NSAIDs follows reports last year that prescription opioids also have limited effectiveness for back pain—one of the most common causes of disability worldwide.

"The American Chiropractic Association urges people to try non-drug approaches to back pain relief first, before resorting to over the counter or prescription medications," said ACA President David Herd, DC.
"In addition to spinal manipulation, chiropractors can offer a range of non-drug therapies for back pain and recommend exercises and important lifestyle changes to help prevent future back pain and injury."

According to a 2016 Gallup survey, more than 35 million people visit a chiropractor annually.

About the American Chiropractic Association
The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) is the largest professional association in the United States representing doctors of chiropractic. ACA promotes the highest standards of ethics and patient care, contributing to the health and well-being of millions of chiropractic patients. Visit us at www.acatoday.org to find an ACA chiropractor near you.