

In this article I am temporarily departing from my discussion of nutritional supplementation to discuss a topic that will be affecting every health care consumer in the coming years. There is a growing trend in health care, largely initiated by the health insurance industry, called evidence based medicine (EVB). You may not realize this, but most procedures used in the health care industry have very little “good” science to support their use. Even prescription medications, which are required to be supported by scientific research, are often prescribed for conditions and for population groups that were not included in the original study. Thus making their use in this manner essentially unscientific.

The insurance industry is beginning to take note of this and is denying coverage for procedures that do not have adequate scientific support. From the insurance industry perspective EVB makes good economic sense. From the health care provider perspective, it limits the available treatment methods and many treatment methods that have not passed scientific scrutiny are still effective. They just haven’t had the opportunity to have been tested scientifically.

As a result of this EVB trend, most health care provider groups are actively developing evidence based guidelines to assist doctors in knowing which procedures are supported by science; which ones have been studied, but have been shown to be ineffective; and which ones have not been adequately studied.

It is this situation that prompted me to write this article. Last weekend I was invited to attend a conference in Baltimore to assist the chiropractic profession in its development of evidence based guidelines. It is a daunting task because there is so much research to review. As a result, it must be tackled in pieces. The first piece, which is nearly complete, reviews treatments for lower back pain. I am proud to tell you that chiropractic care for lower back pain is well supported by research and is in fact, one of the few treatments for low back pain that is supported by the high quality research.

In the long run EVB should be good for health care consumers. It will force more scientific scrutiny, which will eliminate ineffective procedures, reduce health care costs and improve patient safety.