

Traditional medical care for the treatment of acute (recent onset) back pain often involves bed rest, physical therapy and medication. Even though current treatment guidelines recommend against this approach, it is still common place.

We all develop habits, both at work and at home. Doctors also develop treatment habits. Many medical doctors have been using the same treatment methods for back pain for decades, even when research has shown these methods to be ineffective. Old habits die hard.

This was proven in a recent research study out of Canada. Two groups of individuals suffering from acute low back and leg pain were studied. One group received the traditional medical protocol. The other group received evidence based chiropractic management which consisted of chiropractic adjustments twice a week for 4 weeks. Sixteen weeks later, the chiropractic group showed a 10 fold improvement over the group that received medication, passive physical therapy and bed rest.

If doctor's habits are hard to break, so too are the habits of administrators of worker's compensation cases. In our heavily industrial area, it is still rare for a worker who suffers a back injury to be allowed to see a chiropractor. In fact, it is rare for a chiropractor to be included on the required panel of approved doctors. Based on current research and practice guidelines, chiropractic care should be a first line therapy for most back and neck injuries.

I have recently served on a panel of doctors developing guidelines for the California workers compensation system. The results of this effort will be published soon and should help modernize the treatment of back pain in that state. Hopefully, Georgia will have the foresight to launch a similar effort. It will be to the benefit of both industry and its workers.