



-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE!-

***PATIENTS WITH LOW BACK PAIN NOT GETTING THE BEST CARE***  
*Study Reveals Less Than Optimal Primary Care Management of Low Back Pain*

Reston, Virginia, Feb. 11, 2010 – A recent study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* reported a gap between established evidence-based guidelines and the practice patterns of primary care physicians when it comes to the management of patients with low back pain. The study found that despite recommendations to refrain from obtaining diagnostic imaging and prescribing narcotics, the prescription of expensive diagnostic test and ineffective treatments as first line interventions has increased since the guidelines were published. The evidence-based guidelines result in better outcomes and reduced cost in the care of patients with low back pain. The lack of adherence to guidelines is a significant concern, perhaps contributing to the over \$50 Billion the United States spends on the management of low back pain each year.

The clinical practice guidelines, developed and published in late 2008 by the *American College of Physicians* and the *American Pain Society*, reviewed over 1200 items of high quality peer-reviewed research. Clinical practice guidelines are time efficient and cost-effective pathways to management of patients with low back pain. However, the study reported that one of the most important first line interventions supported in the guidelines, patient education and advice to stay active, was only given to 20% of patients. Close to 50% of patients with low back were sent for imaging studies and prescribed opiod analgesics. Less than 18% of patients were referred to allied health specialists like physical therapists.

Spinal manipulation is supported as an effective intervention for acute, sub-acute, and chronic low back pain in the clinical practice guidelines. “Physical therapists utilizing spinal manipulation have demonstrated a significant reduction in pain and disability for individuals with low back pain,” says Robert Rowe, President of the *American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists (AAOMPT)*. Dr. Rowe suggests patient knowledge of the guidelines is important. “Patient awareness of the guidelines and effective interventions like patient education and spinal manipulation can help improve physician adherence to guidelines.” What remains clear from the results is that usual care provided by general practitioners is not consistent with the best care for patients with low back pain

For more on the benefits physical therapists can provide in the management of back and neck problems, contact your nearest physical therapist or visit the American Academy of Manual Physical Therapists website at [www.aaompt.org](http://www.aaompt.org). AAOMPT represents physical therapists by promoting excellence in orthopaedic manual physical therapy practice, education and research.

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