

Association des
chiropraticiens du
Nouveau-Brunswick



New Brunswick
Chiropractors
Association

Pre-budget Submission

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NBCA PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

Back pain and other neuromusculoskeletal disorders have a profound impact on NB's economic welfare, stability and strength of the workforces, and levels of productivity.

The New Brunswick Chiropractors Association (NBCA) is the professional association representing NB licensed chiropractors and their patients. Every year, thousands of New Brunswickers rely on the care of chiropractors to help relieve pain, improve function and enhance quality of life. The NBCA and its members work to improve the health and wellbeing of New Brunswickers by regulating, supporting and promoting excellence in chiropractic practice and patient care. NB chiropractors are trusted spine, muscle and nervous system experts who work to help improve patients' pain, function and quality of life.

The NBCA believes it is time for the Government of New Brunswick (GNB) to invest in a long overlooked and under-estimated burden of disease. Musculoskeletal disorders (MSKD) pose a significant threat to New Brunswickers' health and wellbeing, in addition to the negative impact on New Brunswick's economic prosperity. Compounded by a quickly aging population, musculoskeletal disorders disproportionately affect workers among lower income New Brunswickers doing more physically demanding work.

Action is urgently needed. Chronic or recurrent musculoskeletal disorders are the most prevalent and costliest conditions of all chronic conditions in NB.¹ Currently, there is an insufficient focus on **appropriate, non-pharmacological pain management.** Evidence shows that better access to non-pharmacological, conservative care like chiropractic results in better outcomes, prompt return to work, improved quality of life, as well as reducing costs on the healthcare system. In addition, the inability to move properly inhibits individuals' ability to exercise, for example, and can negatively impact their ability to manage other comorbidities including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and others.

A prosperous province depends on a healthy and productive workforce. Achieving the productivity gains from prevention and management of musculoskeletal disorders requires increased investment in access to conservative care like chiropractic, among others. The NBCA believes that this can be achieved by establishing strategic partnerships and **investing in innovative models of care** to ensure prompt access to appropriate care and enhanced triage and referral. In addition, all regulated healthcare providers should be allowed to practice within their full scope of practice. For NB chiropractors, that would include being able to refer for diagnostic imaging directly and specialist visits. This would allow us to better care for our patients, but also eliminate the redundancy of visits with family physicians.

Below are listed several innovative partnerships and models demonstrating the value of enhancing access to multi-disciplinary care teams including chiropractors.

¹ NBHC. (2016). The Cost of Chronic Health Conditions to New Brunswick. Retrieved from https://www.nbhc.ca/sites/defaultacr/files/documents/june_2016_the_cost_of_chronic_health_conditions_to_nb_-_final.pdf



A BETTER APPROACH TO PAIN MANAGEMENT

The Inter-Professional Spine Assessment and Education Clinics (ISAEC)

Since 2012, the Inter-Professional Spine Assessment and Education Clinics (ISAEC) have been in place across the province to improve the assessment and triage of low back pain. Chiropractors and advanced-practice physiotherapists are in place to assess, educate, and provide evidence-based treatment plans for low back patients. The model allows for more appropriate triage and referrals for surgical consultations and diagnostic imaging candidates.

Wait times to see a professional have been consistently in the range of 12 days for the past 5 years, and a rate of referrals for imaging or specialist consultation of approximately just 7-8% only.² This project has demonstrated possible opportunities to provide patients with more timely access to care and to reduce the use of unnecessary diagnostics and referrals—a huge cost to the system.³

Primary Care Low Back Pain (PCLBP) project

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care established inter-professional primary care (i.e., Aboriginal Health Access Centers (AHACs), Community Health Centers (CHCs), Family Health Teams (FHTs), and Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics (NPLCs)) to design, plan, and implement primary care low back pain management programs. The project targets specific vulnerable populations that would not otherwise have access to these services.

Chiropractors are playing a prominent role in six out of seven sites as musculoskeletal (MSK) experts and clinical leads. The initial \$2.3 million governmental investment has already shown great promise. There are clear indications that embedding health professions with expertise in management of musculoskeletal disorders within primary health care practices has illustrated how increased trust, communication, and relationship building among care providers has led to more coordinated and effective care for patients. In addition, a reduction of use of pharmacotherapies including opioids has been reported.

Mount Carmel Clinic

Mount Carmel Clinic situated in an under-served area of Winnipeg, Manitoba, was founded on the principle that everyone has the right to accessible healthcare. In 2011, the Mount Carmel Clinic introduced chiropractic services, subsidized by the Government of Manitoba, its multi-disciplinary team. The preliminary study⁴ evaluated the outcomes of introducing the service. On average, improvement was demonstrated after 12.7 treatments which was indicated by a statistically and clinically significant reduction in pain. The study concluded that chiropractic services were being utilized and referred to by

² ISAEC Newsletter. (2015): Retrieval from: http://www.isaec.org/uploads/1/3/1/2/13123559/isaec_-_pcp_newsletter_-_may_2015.pdf

³ ISAEC Newsletter. (2014): Retrieval from: http://www.isaec.org/uploads/1/3/1/2/13123559/isaec_-_pcp_newsletter_-_august_2014_-_website.pdf

⁴ Passmore, S., Toth, A., Kanovsky, J., Olin, G. (2015). Initial integration of chiropractic services into a provincially funded inner-city community health centre: a program description. *Journal of the Canadian Chiropractic Association*, 59(4).



other providers and that overall the services rendered significantly decreased musculoskeletal pain in an inner-city population. The initial study should be a very promising indication for government and policy makers in the positive outcomes of targeted investments, notably in musculoskeletal care for specifically vulnerable subgroups.

NBCA PRE-BUDGETARY RECOMMENDATION

To ensure NB's economic growth and prosperity, a strategic investment in a better approach to pain management must be made. Specifically, the Government of New Brunswick should consider the following key recommendation:

Investing in musculoskeletal disorders to curb the costs

New Brunswick chiropractors already play an important role in the management of musculoskeletal disorders, including highly prevalence back and neck pain, by providing safe and effective care to thousands New Brunswickers each year. Utilizing chiropractors in the evidence-based triage of patients (www.isaec.org) with musculoskeletal pain has been shown to reduce unnecessary visits to specialists such as orthopedic surgeons by as much as 90% as well as to reduce use of diagnostic imaging significantly. Therefore, exploring ways to ensure that patients have access to chiropractors through multidisciplinary teams is essential to improving outcomes for patients and reducing unnecessary health care expenditures is needed.

As previously referenced, chiropractors are currently integrated within other provincial health care systems with great success to reduce pressures on the system, save money, efficiently triage, case manage or treat musculoskeletal patients and act as an alternative for patients with medication issues. New Brunswickers deserve similar access to conservative care. Such innovation is also expected to reduce costs and improve outcomes, while helping to maintain a healthy and productive workforce.