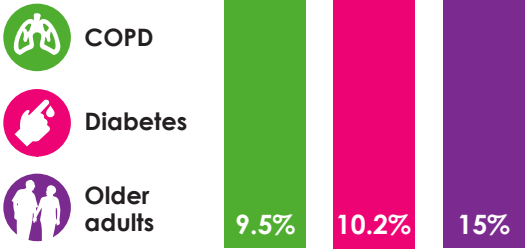


# COMPLEX PATIENTS: INTEGRATING CARE

## Chiropractors can help address the MSK challenges of complex patients and older adults

It is very common for patients with multiple chronic conditions to suffer from MSK conditions that contribute to pain and limit mobility. This can further weaken musculoskeletal strength and prevent patients from engaging in the active phase of their care, inhibiting their self-management efforts. Three common types of patients who are affected in this way are those with COPD and diabetes, as well as older adults.

### Proportion of Ontarian population



### UNDERLYING MSK CONDITIONS



#### COPD

- Nearly 36% of individuals with COPD experience back pain; 13% experience neck pain.
- Compared to healthy adults, self-reported MSK conditions are twice as common among those with COPD.
- 35% of people living with COPD reported pain or discomfort that prevented them from engaging in some or most activities.
- A variety of MSK indicators, such as muscle strength and lower extremity function, have been found to be significant risk factors for disability in patients with COPD.



#### Diabetes

- MSK pain is reported twice as frequently among people with type 2 diabetes.
- Individuals with type 2 diabetes are more likely to suffer from shoulder or neck pain (53% vs. 31%), low back pain (60% vs. 30%), and arm, hand, knee and/or hip pain (71% vs. 34%).
- Diabetes can lead to a variety of MSK challenges, such as joint pain, trigger finger, and painful shoulders.
- A total of 19.8% of patients with diabetes reported that they had pain or discomfort that prevented them from engaging in some or most activities.



#### Older adults

- Disability risk among older adults increases as more areas of the body experience MSK pain.
- MSK pain has been found to increase the risk of falling among older adults.
- 29% of patients aged 65 and older reported having chronic back problems (excluding arthritis and fibromyalgia).
- The most common anatomical site of chronic pain in older adults is the lower back (22.3%), followed by the upper back (9.5%).
- Among adults aged 65 and older, falls were responsible for over half of all injuries. Each year, one third of older adults living in the community will fall at least once, and half of those individuals will fall more than once. In addition, 20% of injury-related deaths can be tracked back to a fall.

### HOW CHIROPRACTIC CAN HELP



#### COPD

- People with COPD use more accessory muscles for breathing, which adds stress on the MSK system.
- This can lead to MSK dysfunction, which can make it challenging for the patient to engage in physical activities recommended by their healthcare providers.
- Chiropractors can help patients with COPD address their comorbid MSK dysfunction, which will help them breathe easier, and, therefore, be more active and improve their quality of life.



#### Diabetes

- Obesity and lack of physical activity can lead to MSK dysfunction in individuals with diabetes.
- As a result, people with diabetes may find it challenging to engage in physical activity recommended by their healthcare providers because of those MSK conditions (it's a vicious circle).
- Evidence suggests that in older adults, physical activity plays a significant role in successful diabetes management, helps with metabolic control, and will likely improve daily function and mobility.
- Chiropractors can help individuals with diabetes address their comorbid MSK dysfunction and related pain, and help them become more active. This will then facilitate the management of their diabetes.



#### Older adults

- Weight loss and regular exercise to maintain strength and balance can help older adults remain functionally independent. However, with MSK injuries, seniors may not be able to continue with exercise plans, or may be reluctant or unable to begin a newly recommended exercise program.
- By helping seniors manage their MSK disorders and related pain, chiropractors can help older adults become more active, manage their other comorbid conditions, and maintain independence and improve quality of life.

### CHIROPRACTORS CAN HELP ALL THREE TYPES OF PATIENTS THROUGH:

- Assessment and diagnosis of MSK conditions
- Patient education and recommendation of self-management strategies
- Guided therapeutic exercise
- Manual therapy
- Health promotion, including fall prevention and nutritional counseling
- Rehabilitation and referrals to community programs

### Case study: Jacquie's story

Jacquie, a 59-year-old former airplane riveter, was in a major car accident in the 1980s that was the beginning of a number of chronic health issues in her life. She suffered severe whiplash, which went untreated for over six months, and caused intense migraine headaches and affected her ability to work and function. In the 1990s Jacquie was in another accident in which she sustained two different kinds of whiplash, a concussion, and a number of other injuries. These injuries left her unable to work, move, or perform many regular daily activities, as well as affected her mood and brought about depression.

Jacquie eventually obtained care from QUEST Community Health Centre in St. Catharines, which offers an integrated approach to care involving family physicians, social services, and a volunteer chiropractic clinic. The QUEST physician recommended chiropractic treatment to help Jacquie regain mobility and relieve pain. After a thorough assessment, and a review of Jacquie's medical documentation and history, the chiropractor proceeded to work on a number of issues, including damage to the neck that limited motion, ulnar nerve entrapment, a cyst in Jacquie's lower back, and upper cervical repetitive strain injuries from her work in aircrafts.

A treatment program was developed that involved muscle strengthening, soft tissue work, and manipulation, with a focus on regaining mobility and decreasing pain. This preliminary therapy was designed to provide the foundation that would enable Jacquie to eventually perform exercises to increase fitness, and improve overall health and conditioning. After a few sessions with the chiropractic clinic, Jacquie reported significant improvements in overall mobility, range of motion in her neck, decreased pain—especially in the area at the base of the skull that was historically affected by her accidents—and, just as importantly, improved mood.

#### New series

"Complex Patients: Integrating Care" is the third in a series of four articles focusing on chiropractic expertise in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of LBP and MSK conditions.

For more information, please visit:

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