



ISSUE BRIEF

Congress Should Enact Legislation to Provide TRICARE Beneficiaries with Access to Chiropractic

BACKGROUND:

In recognition of the value and benefits of the services delivered by doctors of chiropractic, in 2000 Congress enacted into law, (*Section 702 of Public Law 106-398*) a permanent chiropractic benefit within the DoD health care system for active-duty military personnel. Similarly, (*Public Law 107-135*) was enacted in 2001 and provided for the availability of chiropractic care within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system. Medicare beneficiaries also have access to the services delivered by doctors of chiropractic. Federal employees also have access to the services provided by doctors of chiropractic through the largest FEHB plan.

The essential services provided by doctors of chiropractic (DCs) are now available to active duty troops at 60 military treatment facilities in the United States and at bases in Germany and Japan. The availability of the services delivered by doctors of chiropractic in these settings has taken place because of the continued and growing recognition by the public and policymakers that the services delivered by doctors of chiropractic are proven, cost effective, and desired component of our nation's health delivery system. Today there are over 70,000 doctors of chiropractic practicing in the United States, providing care to an estimated 30 million patients annually.

THE ISSUE:

Unfortunately, Congress has not yet acted to ensure that the services delivered by doctors of chiropractic are available to retirees, dependents, and survivor beneficiaries in the military TRICARE system. During the Chiropractic Demonstration Program at the DoD sites prior to enactment of Section 702 of Public Law 106-398, dependents and retirees were provided with services delivered by doctors of chiropractic on a space available basis. By all accounts, the response to such access and services was overwhelmingly positive and effective.

This inequity has resulted in medically retired servicemen and women to lose the chiropractic benefit immediately upon discharge. Many wounded warriors, who depended on the services provided by doctors of chiropractic, suddenly have that treatment option pulled out from under them when they are categorized as "medically retired."

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Recently, the Joint Commission an independent non-profit organization that certifies more than 20,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including every major hospital, revised its pain management standard to include chiropractic services.

Clinical experts in pain management who provide input to the Commission's standards affirmed that treatment strategies may consider both pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic approaches. Services provided by doctors of chiropractic (who were recognized in 2009 as "physicians" by the Commission) are now included in the standard of care for pain management, effective January 2015.

The treatment plan offered by DCs is a non-pharmacologic approach to pain management. The Joint Commission standard advises facilities, when considering the use of medications to treat pain, to weigh both the benefits to the patient, as well as the potential risks of dependency, addiction, and abuse of opioids.

ACTION NEEDED:

- To correct this disparity, in the 115th Congress, Reps. Mike Rogers (R-AL) and Dave Loebsack (D-IA), have introduced **HR 4973**, bipartisan legislation to provide TRICARE recipients with a benefit that is now available to many in the private sector (*access to doctors of chiropractic and services to address pain management, neuromusculoskeletal disorders and related maladies*).
- Members of the U.S. House are urged to contact Rep. Rogers' office, or Rep. Loebsack's office, and 1) offer to **co-sponsor HR 4973** and 2) Contact their colleagues serving on the House Armed Services Committee and urge that the Rogers/Loebsack Chiropractic TRICARE bill be incorporated into the next National Defense Authorization Act or other suitable legislative vehicle.

For Additional Information Please Contact:

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