

Point of View:

IS THERE A ROLE FOR THE PRESCRIPTION OF MEDICATION BY CHIROPRACTORS?

Any response to this question is a matter of perspective. From the perspective of the patient in an isolated rural community a definite 'yes'. From the perspective of the medical profession certainly not! From the perspective of the chiropractor a thoughtful 'maybe'.

An immediate overt benefit of drug prescription by chiropractors would be access to those medication, currently only available on medical prescription, for controlling pain and inflammation. This would enable chiropractors to more completely manage some musculoskeletal conditions. Prescription rights, unless restricted to certain medications, would also give chiropractors access to antibiotics and drugs used for chronic complaints such as hypertension, anxiety and depression. Prescription rights could change the present role of chiropractors and provide for patients a new type

of general practitioner with expertise in manual therapy. Chiropractic drug prescription is however not without its drawbacks.

Drug prescription has the potential to fundamentally change chiropractic care. It has the potential to convert chiropractic's focus from health to disease. It creates the need for additional undergraduate training and practitioner self-education. It increases the burden of practitioner responsibility - drugs have side effects and these must be monitored and recognised.

Whether the commitment required to competently undertake the additional responsibilities of such a role results in a favourable cost: benefit outcome for the individual chiropractor is problematic. Perhaps the question chiropractors should be asking is not "Is there a role?" but rather "Do we want such a role?"

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