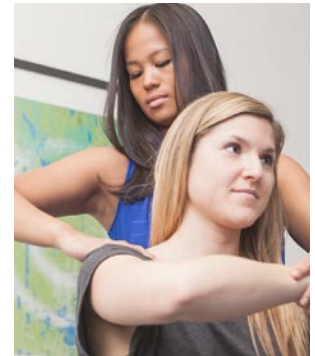
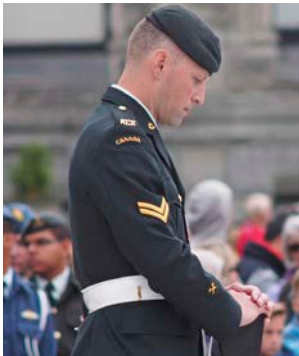


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A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR CANADA



2020 CCA PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION:

August 2019



List of Recommendations

A healthier future for Canada requires urgent efforts to reduce the burden of musculoskeletal pain and disease. The CCA recommends the government take the following immediate steps:

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government allow chiropractors to be assessors for the federal Disability Tax Credit Certificate.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government allow members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to access their chiropractic care benefits faster and easier.





Introduction

The Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA) is a national, voluntary association which represents Canada's 9,000 licensed chiropractors, and advocates on national issues that impact the musculoskeletal (MSK) health of Canadians.

Each year, **more than 11 million Canadians** suffer from MSK conditions and by 2031 this number is projected to **grow to an alarming 15 million**.¹ MSK conditions such as back pain, headaches, arm or neck strain and diseases of the muscle and joints are having a devastating impact on **Canadians' health, quality of life, workforce participation and the economy**. The economic cost of MSK conditions in Canada is an estimated \$22 billion annually, and it remains a leading reason for short and long-term disability.²

Reducing this significant burden produced by MSK pain and disease is urgent and necessary to ensure millions of Canadians can have a higher quality of life and enjoy a healthier future.

Chiropractors can help. Chiropractors are one of Canada's largest primary care professions and experts in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of MSK conditions, as well as the management of pain caused by these conditions.

This submission contains two recommendations on immediate steps the government of Canada can take to allow Canadians who are suffering to receive the help they need and reduce the impact of this growing epidemic.



1

Allow chiropractors to assess patients for the Disability Tax Credit Certificate.

Every year, 4.5 million Canadians rely on services offered by chiropractors. Among these patients are Canadians living with disabilities who require ongoing treatment and management of their MSK conditions from their chiropractors.

Most common among these conditions is osteoarthritis (OA) - which can limit the ability of over five million Canadians from completing activities of daily living due to pain and loss of function.³ The Arthritis Society notes:

“Many Canadians suffering from osteoarthritis trust their chiropractor to help manage pain and improve function that can restrict activities of daily living including dressing, walking. The Arthritis Society both recognizes and values the expertise of chiropractors in the assessment and management of conditions such as OA that can progress to the point of disability.” — Janet Yale, President and CEO, The Arthritis Society

Currently these patients face an unfair **obstacle in accessing the federal Disability Tax Credit (DTC)** they are entitled to because the chiropractors they regularly rely on are not authorized by the federal government to assess patients for this important benefit. **This is an oversight which needs to be corrected.**

Unfortunately, this forces patients to visit another healthcare professional who may not be aware of or familiar with their patient history. Patients who live with this level of disability in rural areas are at even greater disadvantage for accessing healthcare providers who are authorized to assess their DTC applications.

Chiropractors **already have the authority to diagnose disability in every province** and are recognized as assessors under many similar provincial programs such as Workers' Compensation and Motor Vehicle Accident rehabilitation.

Amending the *Income Tax Act* (1985), s. 118.4 (2) to add chiropractors to the list of practitioners eligible to assess disability for the DTC can finally close this gap and streamline access for eligible patients. This change could help the most severe of patients receive the assistance they need to live their lives fully.



②

Allow members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to access their chiropractic care benefits faster and easier.

Among the millions of Canadians suffering from MSK pain are thousands of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members. Due to the physical demands put on active military personnel, MSK conditions like back and neck pain for active servicepeople are double that of the general Canadian population.⁴

MSK injury is a major occupational risk of a military career and is **responsible for 42% of medical releases - the leading cause of a military career ending as a result of a medical condition.**⁵ Yet military personnel continue to face barriers in receiving chiropractic care.

The chiropractic benefit currently available to CAF members requires a physician referral to off-base care. This referral requirement can **delay access and place an additional burden on members seeking treatment for a work-related injury.** Evidence shows that early treatment of acute MSK conditions has a higher efficacy and better outcomes for patients and avoids the onset of chronic conditions.⁶ As well, CAF members are allotted only ten chiropractic visits per year which is insufficient for those experiencing chronic conditions.

In comparison, chiropractic care is well integrated into the US military and Veterans Administration. Evidence from the US shows that adding chiropractic care to standard medical care in the US military decreased pain and improved physical function, with no additional costs incurred.⁷

To begin addressing the need for easier, more timely and robust access to chiropractic care for CAF members, the requirement for a physician referral to seek treatment from chiropractors should be removed.



Conclusion

The CCA urges the government of Canada to immediately implement these recommendations to better support Canadians suffering from the burden of MSK pain and disease. The first recommendation, authorizing chiropractors to assess their patients for the DTC benefit, can finally correct an oversight which has long created a barrier for chiropractic patients living with disabilities. The second recommendation, eliminating the physician referral requirement for CAF members to receive chiropractic services, can prevent delays in receiving essential MSK treatment. These small but powerful changes can contribute to a healthier future for Canada by providing Canadians with the help they need – when they need it.



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