

Over the last 25 years, I've seen thousands of patients with neck and back pain. Often I am their last resort for a solution to managing their pain.

Unfortunately, this is contrary to best practices, which dictate conservative care as the first approach to low back pain care.

In 1993, when chiropractic was covered by OHIP, the total chiropractic budget for the year was \$70 million. Within the first nine months of the year, the budget was depleted and Ontarians no longer had access to any coverage for chiropractic. At this time, the Ontario government hired Dr. Pran Manga to evaluate the most effective therapy for low back pain. Dr. Manga, looking at only medical research, determined unequivocally that chiropractic was the most efficacious approach to low back pain. He then recommended that all patients with low back pain should see a chiropractor first before any imaging or specialist referrals, and that the care should be fully covered by

# Should You Wait For A Specialist?

By: Dr. Nik Bair-Patel,  
Chiropractor



OHIP. He said that this would cost OHIP an additional \$25 million (chiropractic fees) but would save \$300-700 million per year on unnecessary imaging and specialist referral costs (and more if you included costs for decreased productivity secondary to lost days of work etc). Despite the findings, in 2000, the Ontario government delisted chiropractic from OHIP, realizing an immediate \$200 million savings. The consequence of that decision was that with the increased cost barrier to chiropractic, medical

doctors made more referrals for imaging and specialists, resulting in an overall dramatic increase in costs to the system.

Fast forward to 2013, when health care costs related to low back pain, were out of control. Guidelines were issued to say that imaging should only be done in specific cases (trauma, neurologic deficit, suspicion of cancer), and only after a period of conservative care, such as with a doctor of chiropractic. Imaging is not only costly but can be harmful due to radiation exposure and can cause delays in

accessing care, so should be used judiciously and appropriately. The guidelines were based on the fact that 70% of orthopaedic and neurology referrals did not adhere to best practices regarding imaging and referral and were therefore inappropriate and gained no benefit for the patient.

Just recently an article was published in The Lancet, a prestigious medical journal, stating that current medical management of low back pain was not only ineffective but was complicit in aggravating and worsening the health of the general population through inappropriate advice and misuse of medication (read: opioid crisis).

(Read the remainder of this article on our website.)

### ASK THE EXPERT:

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**\$30**  
PER MONTH

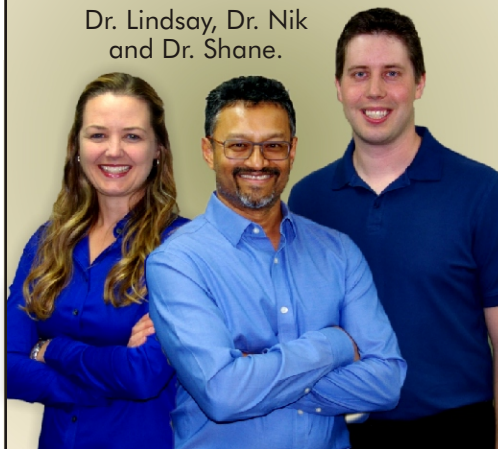


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## Your Back Pain Team

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to go from pain-ful to pain-free.  
Dr. Lindsay, Dr. Nik  
and Dr. Shane.



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