In response to: Karen Cheney’s “4 Surgeries to Avoid”, (AARP, July/August 2011 Issue)

Dear Editor,

In reading “4 Surgeries to Avoid”, featured in your July/August 2011 issue, I was pleased to see an overview of reasons and alternative procedures to help individuals avoid surgery. However, I was stunned by the article’s lack of inclusion of one of the most widely used, clinically and financially effective, evidence-based alternatives to surgery for many patients - chiropractic care.

While the emphasis of your article was on spinal stenosis related problems many spinal surgeries are related to nerve root pain secondary to lumbar disc herniation. A recent study by surgeons and chiropractors in the province of Alberta, Canada published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, entitled, “Manipulation or Microdisketomy for Sciatica? A Prospective Randomized Clinical Study,” concluded that chiropractic spinal manipulation was just as effective as microdiskectomy for patients struggling with sciatica secondary to lumbar disk herniation (LDH). The population studied had experienced unrelenting low-back and leg pain for at least six months and had failed to obtain relief with exercise, physical therapy and non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory medicines. Overall, 60 percent of patients who received spinal manipulation avoided spinal surgery and benefited to the same degree as those who underwent surgery!

In addition, when factoring in costs, the study “Outpatient Lumbar Microdiscectomy: A Prospective Study in 122 Patients”, indicates more than 200,000 microdiskectomies are performed annually in the United States, at a direct cost of $5 billion, or $25,000 per procedure. When applying these figures to the JMPT literature, there is a direct, total savings of $22,900 per manipulation patient, resulting in system-wide savings of $2.75 billion dollars annually.

When addressing surgical alternatives; the public deserves to be informed of the clinical and economic research supporting chiropractic care.

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