

New Information and Trends in Chiropractic Practice 1991 through 2014

- The proportion of practicing chiropractors who have a bachelor's, master's or Ph.D. degree has risen steadily from 53.7% in 1991 to 78.8% in 2014.
- Both the quantity and quality of chiropractic research have increased substantially since the first NBCE survey in 1991, permitting doctors of chiropractic to use empirical evidence to help guide their treatment of patients.
- The typical practitioner now spends more than a quarter (26.3%) of his or her work time documenting patient care; this amount has almost doubled since 1998 (13.8%).
- Virtually all chiropractors report providing health promotion and wellness care in addition to spinal and extremity adjustments.
- Half of practicing doctors of chiropractic (50.1%) have their own radiographic equipment; the percentage was 59.4% in 2009. The portion of chiropractors with radiographic equipment who use digital imaging has more than doubled in 5 years — from 11.6% in 2009 to 28.1% in 2014.
- A smaller proportion of chiropractors now report working more than 50 hours weekly — 10.2% in 1991 and 6.1% in 2014.
- The percentage of female doctors of chiropractic has essentially doubled — from 13.3% in 1991 to 27.1% in 2014.
- Doctors of chiropractic reported co-management of a greater proportion of health conditions with other professionals in 2014 than in 1998; this suggests an increasingly integrated approach to patient care.
- One in fifteen (6.7%) chiropractors responding to the 2014 survey reported that they were employed under contract to provide chiropractic care to active or retired military personnel. This is a substantial increase from 2009, when it was 4.4%.
- Both the frequency and the risks of professional functions were rated very consistently in 2014 and in 2009; this is a useful indicator of the uniformity with which chiropractic occupational tasks are performed.
- One in six (14.6%) chiropractors reporting in 2014 described their practice location as a rural small town or a rural area; the percentage was 15.9% in 2009.
- More than four of five chiropractors (83.0%) described their work role as the sole proprietor or a partner of a chiropractic practice; only 13.5% reported being an associate or employee.

PRACTICE ANALYSIS of Chiropractic 2015

*A project report, survey analysis, and summary
of the practice of chiropractic within the United States*

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Donna L. Craft, D.C., President
National Board of Chiropractic Examiners

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Preface

To ensure that the assessment of chiropractic students and doctors of chiropractic accurately represents what chiropractors do in practice, it is necessary to conduct a practice analysis of chiropractors around the nation. The study results also provide legislators, insurance representatives, educators, and the general public with an overview of chiropractic's growing importance and effectiveness as a healthcare profession.

This survey report contains data collected in 1991, 1998, 2003, 2009, and 2014 by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE). Contained herein are important survey findings that reveal practitioner and patient demographics, patient health issues, and treatment procedures common to the chiropractic profession nationwide. This book also contains recent reports of research investigating chiropractic's efficacy in the treatment of a wide variety of health concerns and provides descriptions and explanations of how this large-scale survey of U.S. chiropractors was conducted and reported.

Like the previous four practice analyses conducted in 1991, 1998, 2003, and 2009, this most recent analysis presents the findings in a clear, organized format; such a presentation can only be achieved by the significant efforts of many people. These individuals include: private chiropractic practitioners, statisticians, editors, and NBCE staff members. Special thanks must also be given to the chiropractors who responded to the survey so that an accurate and representative picture of the profession might emerge.

A commitment to excellence by our nation's chiropractors and by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners is a distinguishing mark of our profession and expands public awareness of the importance of chiropractic in this nation's healthcare system.



Martin W. Kollasch, D.C., Ph.D. (c), Executive Vice President
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Introduction

The chronology of tests and measurements can be traced to the beginning of recorded history. Early writings describe processes including rituals that gauged the knowledge, wisdom, physical endurance, or bravery of ancient peoples.

At one time or another, through one form or another, human beings have always devised methods to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities of those seeking to meet recognized standards. As society has become more complex and specialized, and as the consequences of assessment decisions have become more significant, with procedures and results increasingly scrutinized, strict guidelines for obtaining reliable and valid test results have emerged. Today, these guidelines are established and refined by individuals, testing organizations, and the United States government.

In its role as the national and international testing agency for the chiropractic profession, the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners adheres to recognized standards that require the preparation and administration of fair, uniform, and valid tests. Specifically, testing guidelines clearly state that, “Typically, some form of job or practice analysis provides the primary basis for defining the content domain” (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014, p. 182).

Organization of the Report

While compiling data for the *NBCE Practice Analysis of Chiropractic*, the authors were committed to providing comprehensive and accurate documentation of every aspect of the practice analysis project. Repeatedly surfacing during the compilation process was the reminder that the readers of this report will include individuals with varying degrees of familiarity with the fields of chiropractic and/or testing. This prevailing awareness affected the construction of the report in both content and format.

At every step, the authors presented the relevant data, then stepped back to assess whether the body of information offered previously in the text was sufficient to afford and facilitate comprehension by a full range of readers. In many cases, the authors resolved this question by including clarifying background information.

Additionally, entering into the decision to include some passages of text was the need to acquaint readers with licensed practitioners of chiropractic, who provided the data upon which the practice analysis report is based. Thus, the authors have attempted to present an objective and well-rounded picture of present-day chiropractors and their practices. Also addressed is the historical background of the profession and current information including educational requirements for becoming a chiropractor.

The information is often presented as a general overview, followed by a more detailed topical discussion presented chronologically. The editors have attempted to convey information through visual means where appropriate. A glossary of terms can also be found at the end of this report.

The first two chapters serve to familiarize the reader with the chiropractic profession and its practitioners, including the personal, educational, and professional criteria these individuals met in becoming *licensed practitioners of chiropractic*. Also presented is research addressing the efficacy of chiropractic health care.

Chapter 3 provides background information relative to occupational licensing. Here, readers are given general information concerning licensure and certification testing and some legal aspects that shape regulatory agency requirements.

In Chapter 4, we present the procedures necessary to have project validity. This chapter discusses the organization and design of the final survey form used in the practice analysis project.

Chapter 5 describes the methods and factors utilized in compiling the survey mailing list, tracking all components, tabulating the data, etc. A number of the many steps taken to encourage a higher rate of response are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the respondent chiropractors and their practice characteristics. Included is a summary of conditions, treatments, and professional activities within chiropractic practice. The subsequent chapters provide a detailed breakdown of the characteristics of the “typical” chiropractic practitioner (Chapter 7) and the “typical” chiropractic patient, patient conditions and chiropractic management of those conditions (Chapter 8) as indicated by the survey response data.

The final chapter of the *Practice Analysis of Chiropractic 2015* report (Chapter 9) summarizes the response data relative to professional functions, knowledge, and treatment procedures performed by the practitioners participating in the survey.

The appendices include a copy of the 2014 Survey of Chiropractic Practice and lists of survey participants and organizations mentioned in this publication. Also included in the appendices are the American Chiropractic Colleges’ Chiropractic Paradigm and its Chiropractic Scope and Practice. The appendices are followed by a bibliography, a glossary of terms, and an index.



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