

Orthotic Insole Use and Patient Satisfaction in an Outpatient Chiropractic Clinic

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The effectiveness of foot orthotics is a controversial and often debated topic. Some authors suggest significant clinical advantages, mainly based on studies with heterogeneous samples. However, reviews of the literature assessing the benefit of orthotics for more specific disorders demonstrate equivocal results. Prevention of back and lower extremity disorders through the use of orthotics has also demonstrated equivocal results. Even though data are lacking on specific therapeutic efficacy of foot orthotics, there appears to be a high level of satisfaction with use. However, there are no data on patient satisfaction of foot orthotics in a general population. Furthermore, there are no data on the reasons for use within a chiropractic population. The purpose of this study was to survey the reasons for foot orthotic use and the resultant level of satisfaction within a chiropractic outpatient clinic.

METHODS

Subjects were randomly sampled from a list of patients who previously purchased Foot Levelers orthotics at a chiropractic teaching clinic. A three-page, IRB-approved survey was either mailed or personally presented to each selected subject. The survey consisted of 19 questions including the subject's chief complaint when initially presenting to the clinic, the reason orthotics were recommended, and the subject's overall satisfaction with their orthotics. All patients were fitted for orthotics in the manner described and taught by Foot Levelers, Inc. Prior to use, patients were instructed to wear the orthotics for progressively longer periods of time each day in order for the body to accommodate, until the orthotics could be comfortably worn as needed. Data collected from the survey were collapsed descriptively. Variables significantly associated with level of satisfaction were determined using multivariate modeling.

RESULTS

Of the 100 questionnaires sent out, 100 were eventually returned for a response rate of 100%. The majority

of respondents were male (66%) and Caucasian (82%). The majority of patients receiving orthotics initially presented to the clinic with a chief complaint of foot pain (32%), low back pain (31%), or knee pain (26%). However, when queried why orthotics were prescribed, the majority of patients stated the reason was the symptom of knee pain (27%) or the biomechanical stress caused by flat feet (71%). After receiving the foot orthotics, the majority of patients reported that it took more than 1 week to acclimate (47%). The majority of subjects (79%) were satisfied with their orthotics, and 73% would recommend orthotics to a friend. "Level of satisfaction" was positively associated with the duration of orthotic use ($p < .05$) and whether the orthotics helped the patient become more physically active ($p < .05$). "Level of satisfaction" was negatively associated with the length of time the patient took to get used to the orthotic ($p < .05$) and whether there were new symptoms related to orthotic use ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

This study represents the first survey of foot orthotic use and satisfaction of use in a chiropractic setting. The majority of disorders treated by orthotics in this setting were biomechanically related, as previously hypothesized. The main disorders described were flat feet and knee pain, which have consistently been described as indications for treatment with orthotics. Also, the majority of subjects surveyed were satisfied with the use of orthotics, similar to previous studies. Patient satisfaction and willingness to refer indicates that chiropractic physicians might better help their patients resolve painful conditions related to biomechanical deficits by prescribing custom-made orthotics as indicated.

CONCLUSION

In a random sample of chiropractic patients who utilized foot orthotics, the majority of subjects indicated that they wore orthotics for knee pain and flat feet and that they were satisfied with foot orthotics for their symptoms.