

# Your piece of the pie



Are your financial frustrations finally feeling some relief? Check the results of our annual nationwide survey to find out what piece of the pie you're getting.

BY MELISSA HEYBOER

**T**he results are in for our 14th Annual Salary & Expense Survey and every indication points to good news.

Although the reasons are not entirely clear, and our results have a margin of error, this year's survey shows a sizeable increase in the total compensation and annual salary for chiropractors. Are you one of the lucky ones feeling this financial relief?

Chiropractors reported an average annual salary of \$115,513 and an average total compensation of \$123,375. While average total compensation has been higher in recent years, the average salary for DCs is the highest it has been since 1998 when the average salary was \$131,200. It should also be noted that 1998 was the first year the salary and expense survey was completed.

Though average billings and collections were right on par with last year, the average reimbursement rate was nearly 7 percentage points higher (66 percent and 59 percent, respectively). Average billings for DCs were \$523,014 compared to \$541,396 last year. Average collections were \$345,247 compared to \$323,421 last year.

## Possible causes

So why the dramatic shift in salaries in

2010? A few of our experts weighed in and provided some plausible insights.

Mark Sanna, DC, ACRB Level II, FICC, and CEO of Breakthrough Coaching says that it is possible Americans are finally beginning to "loosen their belts."

"If I remember correctly, this past holiday season was a 'best ever' with much more spending that was anticipated," he said. "I believe patients are getting care more because they are in need and less fearful."

Sanna also speculated that the recession could have had such a substantial impact on the industry that "smaller and less successful practices may have gone under in the last couple of years." As a result, those practices with decreasing numbers wouldn't have filled out the survey.

Similarly, Joseph Mannella, DC, says it's possible those chiropractors who aren't making as much, simply don't want to fill out surveys such as these.

"Doctors who are doing better are more willing to talk about it," he said. "Five hundred is a small sample size in this industry. And someone struggling is not going to fill out a survey like this."

Mannella also likens the results of this survey to the state of our nation.

"It's like Obama coming out and saying things are great. They really aren't

great everywhere. It's a sensitive issue when a lot of doctors are struggling."

Another possible reason for salary increase is the increase in reimbursement rates (66 percent this year compared to 59 percent last year).

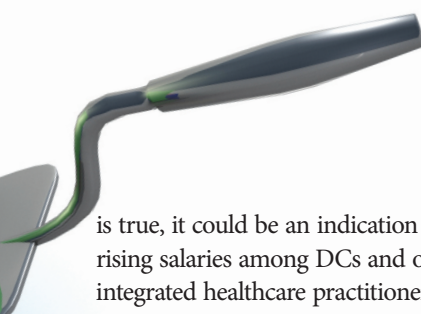
Michael Wiles, DC, provost and vice-president for academic affairs at Northwestern Health Sciences University says, "I believe there is much more emphasis on quality care and outcome-based care than we've seen in the past.

"This process is being driven by a number of factors, not the least of which is the third-party payers who are increasingly demanding documentation of effectiveness of care. I would hope that a positive outcome of this has been the delivery of more effective outcome-based care, which is reflected in higher reimbursement to providers."

## The state of healthcare

Maybe more telling is a recent study from the University of Wisconsin, which implies that due to the high cost of healthcare and rising costs of prescription drugs, many patients may be choosing to forgo doctors visits.<sup>1</sup>

Instead, it's possible individuals may be experimenting with alternative medicines such as chiropractic, acupuncture, and massage therapy. If this philosophy



is true, it could be an indication of rising salaries among DCs and other integrated healthcare practitioners.

Wiles agrees with this notion saying, “The profession has responded to the economic challenges that the entire country has been facing for a number of years and this response has included the offering and provision of more consumer-driven services, as well as more attention to the establishing of relationships within integrative healthcare settings.”

### Tightened belts

Despite the increase in average salaries, this year’s survey indicates that chiropractors may be spending less on annual expenses as well.

The average amount of money spent on advertising this year (\$9,666) dropped nearly \$1,000 from last year’s average (\$10,660) and \$3,000 from two years ago (\$12,604).

Likewise, chiropractors are spending less on office space. This year’s survey has DCs paying on average \$24,114 a year for their office space compared to \$26,146 last year. ■

#### Reference:

<sup>1</sup>School of Medicine and Public Health, University of Wisconsin; 2011

## 3-Year Comparison of Respondent Information

Personal Characteristics	2011	2010	2009
Average age	45.4	44.5	44.9
Male	78.6%	77.2%	83.6%
Female	21.4%	22.8%	16.4%
Years in practice	16.5	16.3	16.2
Solo practitioner	66.1%	66.1%	70.9%
Group practitioner/partner	25.7%	23.5%	23.8%
Associate	6.3%	9.4%	3.9%
Franchise owner	1.9%	1.0%	1.4%

### Practice Characteristics

Suburban	57.7%	55.5%	59.0%
Urban	25.6%	26.1%	28.3%
Rural	16.7%	18.4%	12.7%
No. of employees	3.2	3.2	2.9
Hours/week in patient care	31.4	33.1	32.2
Average PVA	26.8	N.A.	N.A.
Average patient visits/week	122.5	122.4	110.0
Average new patients/week	6.1	5.9	5.7

### Income Comparisons

Average gross billings	\$523,014	\$541,396	\$389,387
Average gross collections	\$345,247	\$323,421	\$271,543
Average DC salary	\$115,513	\$87,538	\$94,454
Average DC total comp.	\$123,375	\$112,368	\$145,791

### Expenses

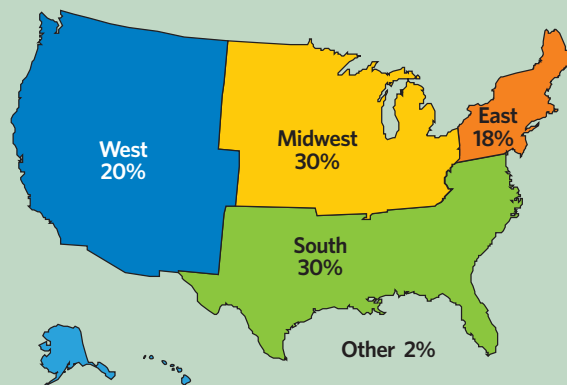
Advertising	\$9,666	\$10,660	\$12,604
Malpractice insurance	\$2,413	\$2,405	\$2,335
Office lease or mortgage (yr)	\$24,114	\$26,146	\$23,692

## About this survey

Our 14th Annual Salary & Expense Survey had 466 doctors of chiropractic responding to the confidential, Web-based questionnaire. Throughout March and April 2011, *Chiropractic Economics* magazine invited practicing chiropractors and CAs to participate in our annual survey.

We extended the invitation by email and through announcements in our e-newsletter, “Newsflash,” and on our social networking sites. Additionally, we invited a number of state associations to encourage their members to participate in the survey.

**Regional representation.** Our response to this year’s survey was fairly wide-ranging, and we received at least one response from every state but Hawaii, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The regional breakdown is as follows: South, 30 percent; Midwest, 30 percent; East, 18 percent; and West, 20 percent. Another 2 percent came from outside the U.S.



**Statistics.** You will find references to only averages (or means) in this year’s survey. Feedback from readers impressed us that the survey is better understood by only stating averages. The average is the number calculated by dividing the total by the number in the set — an arithmetic average.

# All replies considered

This year's survey attracted a wide-range of doctors, from 26 to 76 years old, who have been in practice for approximately six months to 47 years. By averaging the responses to many of this year's questions, we can define what the average respondent might look like:

- ▶ Male (21.4 percent of respondents were female);
  - ▶ 45.4 years old;
  - ▶ A solo practitioner (66.1 percent); and
  - ▶ Licensed in 1.4 states;
- Our average respondent:
- ▶ Owns 1.1 clinics;
  - ▶ Prefers to practice in the suburbs (57.7 percent);
  - ▶ Employs 3.2 individuals in the clinic (2.0 of whom work full time);

- ▶ Sees 122.5 patients each week;
- ▶ Has a patient-visit average (PVA) of 26.8;
- ▶ Attracts 6.1 new patients each week; and
- ▶ Sees patients 31.4 hours a week.

This respondent:

- ▶ Has average billings of \$523,041 and collections of \$345,247 for a reimbursement rate of 66 percent;
- ▶ Sells products to patients for 8.8 percent of gross revenues;
- ▶ Pays his CAs \$26,835 and himself \$115,513; and
- ▶ Enjoys average total compensation of \$123,375.

Finally, this typical respondent annually spends \$24,114 on office leases or mortgages, \$9,666 on advertising, and \$2,413 on malpractice insurance. ■

## Overview of 2010 Respondents

### Personal Characteristics

Average age	45.4
Male	78.6%
Female	21.4%
Years in practice	16.5
Solo DC	66.1%
In a group or partnership	25.7%
Associate	6.3%
Franchise owner	1.9%
No. of state licenses	1.4

### Clinic Characteristics

Clinics	1.1
Urban	25.6%
Suburban	57.7%
Rural	16.7%
Employees	3.2
Average PVA	26.8
Average patients/week	122.5
Average new patients/week	6.1
Cash practice	21.2%

### Specialty

General	63.6%
Family	15.9%
Sports/rehab	9.3%
Pediatrics	1.6%
Other	9.6%

### Specialists In Clinic

LMT	67.2%
Acupuncturist	22.4%
PT	9.4%
Nutritionist	16.7%
Trainer	12.0%
MD/DO	9.9%
Other	17.7%

### Income

Average billings	\$523,014
Range	10.2K-6M
Average collections	\$345,247
Range	10K-2.2M
% income from retail	8.8%

### Average Salaries

Average associate	\$67,347
Average MD/DO	\$155,000
Average CA	\$26,835
Average LMT	\$27,124
Average PT	\$38,775
Average DC	\$115,513
Total DC comp.	\$123,375

### Average Expenses

Advertising	\$9,666
Malpractice insurance	\$2,413
Office lease/mortgage (yr)	\$24,114

### Modalities Provided

Nutrition	59.0%
PT/rehab	65.3%
Exercise	59.3%
Massage	56.6%
Weight Loss	32.6%
Laser therapy	27.3%
Decompression	27.0%
Acupuncture	25.0%
Homeopathy	13.3%

**Let your voice be heard! Be on the lookout for your chance to participate in our upcoming Fees & Reimbursements Survey.**

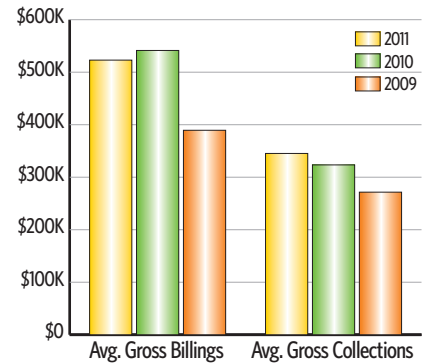
# Average billings and collections

Average billings and collections remained quite similar to last year, but still significantly higher than 2009. In 2009, respondents reported average gross billings of \$389,387. In 2010 that number increased to \$541,396. This year's survey saw a slight decrease (\$523,014), but nothing drastic.

Despite a decrease in billings,

however, this year's collections saw an increase over last year — from \$323,421 to \$345,247. Average collections have steadily increased over the past three years. In 2009, average gross collections were \$271,543, while in 2010 they increased to \$323,421. As a result, the reimbursement rate increased from 59.7 percent (2010) to 66 percent (2011). ■

**3-Year Comparison of Average Gross Billings and Collections**



## Apples to oranges

The purpose of this survey is to help you see how you compare to other chiropractors in the profession. But do you ever wonder how you compare to other healthcare providers, too?

*Medical Economics* magazine typically publishes a comparable survey each year; however, this year they did not. *Contemporary Pediatrics*, which is owned by the same company as *Medical Economics*, published a similar survey, however, that compared pediatricians to general practitioners, which helped us arrive at this data.

According to their survey, earnings for general practitioners were roughly \$163,000 compared with our survey, which found DCs had a total compensation of \$123,375.

Our survey, however, indicated that DCs spend fewer hours a week in patient care than general practitioners. Chiropractors reported spending on average 31.4 hours a week in patient care, while general practitioners average 51 hours a week.

To compare more statistics between chiropractors and general practitioners, you can find both *Medical Economics* and *Contemporary Pediatrics* online at [www.modernmedicine.com](http://www.modernmedicine.com). ■

# Group versus solo

Continuing on last year's trend, this year's survey once again saw a slight increase in the popularity of groups. Solo practices remained the same (66.1 percent) from 2010 to 2011, however, group practices rose from 23.5 percent in 2010 to 25.7 percent in 2011.

Likewise, average billings and collections for group practices also rose. Last year, group practices saw average billings of \$666,521, while this year's billings rose significantly to \$869,990. Collections went from \$382,780 in 2010 to \$563,998 in 2011.

In 2011, on average, group practices consisted of five employees, with 3.4 being full time. This is down slightly from 2010, which saw group practices employing 5.2 employees, 3.8 of whom were full time.

Solo practices also saw a small decline. This year they employed 2.2 employees (down from 2.4 last year), with 1.2 being full time (down from 1.6 in 2010).

The most significant change from 2010 to 2011 was seen in DCs' average salary and total compensation.

Salary for group DCs averaged \$166,870 with a total compensation of \$174,557 versus \$98,992 average salary for solo practitioners and a total compensation of \$99,546.

*(Note: Total compensation for unincorporated DCs is defined as earnings after tax-deductible expenses, but before income tax. For DCs in a professional corporation, it is the sum of salary, bonuses, and retirement/profit-sharing contributions made on their behalf.)*

Group DCs also saw a higher percentage of paid time off, with 66.1 percent for groups compared to 59.7 percent for solo DCs.

Similarly, retirement benefits also favored the group practitioner: 40.9 percent compared to 24.6 percent for solo practitioners.

When calculating practice expenses — advertising, malpractice insurance, and office leases — groups naturally had higher costs. For those three expenses, groups paid \$52,367 annually compared with \$29,356 for solo practices.

This year, solo practitioners saw on average 97.2 patients per week, while group practices averaged 179.3. ■

## Comparison of Solo & Group Practices

Clinic Label	Solo	Group
Clinic	72.3%	54.6%
Wellness center	21.8%	32.8%
Medical spa	0.0%	0.0%
Rehab center	5.9%	12.6%
Franchisee	0.0%	0.0%

### Clinic Statistics

No. of employees	2.2	5.0
No. of FT employees	1.2	3.4
PVA	24.6	31.1
No. of patients/week	97.2	179.3
New patients/week	4.2	9.9
Cash only	24.2%	17.5%
Mean billings	\$325,823	\$869,990
Mean collections	\$233,515	\$563,998

### Compensation and Benefits

Retirement	24.6%	40.9%
Healthcare benefits	21.9%	43.2%
Incentives or bonuses	47.7%	53.2%
Profit sharing	4.5%	12.9%
Paid time off	59.7%	66.1%
Average CA	\$25,817	\$26,482
Average LMT	\$18,528	\$29,945
Average DC	\$98,992	\$166,870
Average total DC comp.	\$99,546	\$174,557

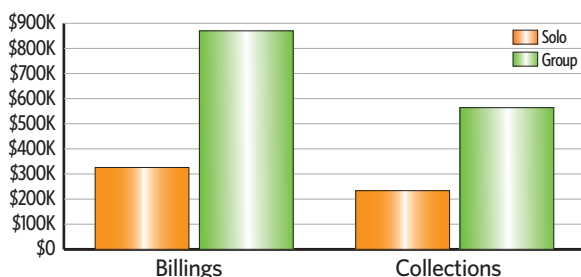
### Services Provided

LMT	68.7%	68.2%
Acupuncturist	16.9%	30.6%
PT	8.0%	9.6%
Other	13.3%	20.9%
Nutritionist	16.9%	17.7%
Trainer	6.2%	22.6%
MD/DO	5.3%	8.1%

### Expenses

Advertising	\$7,298	\$15,560
Malpractice insurance	\$2,212	\$2,949
Office lease or mortgage (yr)	\$19,846	\$33,858

Solo vs. Group: Average Billings and Collections



Solo vs. Group: Average DC Compensation



## DC vs. Integrated Healthcare Clinics: Significant Comparisons

Practice Type	Integrated	DC Only
Solo	56.7%	75.2%
Group/partnership	30.1%	21.3%
Franchisee	2.6%	1.2%

### Clinic Label

Clinic Label	Integrated	DC Only
Clinic	59.6%	71.7%
Wellness center	28.5%	21.3%
Medical spa	0.0%	0.4%
Rehab center	11.4%	5.9%

### Location

Location	Integrated	DC Only
Urban	11.9%	22.2%
Suburban	55.9%	58.6%
Rural	32.2%	19.2%

### Specialty

Specialty	Integrated	DC Only
General	56.1%	66.2%
Family	9.8%	18.2%
Sports/Rehab	18.3%	6.1%
Pediatrics	2.4%	1.3%
Other	13.4%	8.2%

### Clinic Statistics

Clinic Statistics	Integrated	DC Only
No. of employees	4.0	2.8
No. of FT employees	3.1	1.5
PVA	28.6	25.2
Patients per week	136.4	115.8
New patients/week	7.6	5.6
Cash only	25.9%	19.7%

### Expenses

Expenses	Integrated	DC Only
Advertising	\$12,441	\$9,037
Malpractice insurance	\$2,669	\$2,346
Office lease/mortgage (yr)	\$26,336	\$23,547

### Compensation and Benefits

Compensation and Benefits	Integrated	DC Only
Offers retirement plan	34.4%	29.7%
Healthcare benefits	37.5%	25.6%
Offers incentives or bonuses	69.2%	47.2%
Profit sharing	7.6%	5.6%
Paid time off	66.0%	62.6%
Average CA	\$27,016	\$25,731
Average LMT	\$26,044	\$23,055
Average DC	\$158,296	\$104,396
Average total DC comp.	\$173,411	\$108,402

## Integrated clinics versus DCs only

Practices with a chiropractor (DC) and a medical doctor (MD) and/or physical therapist (PT) are considered integrated healthcare practices or multidisciplinary practices.

In our 2011 survey, billings and collections, as well as DC salaries and total compensation, jumped tremendously from last year. Whether this is a new trend remains to be seen.

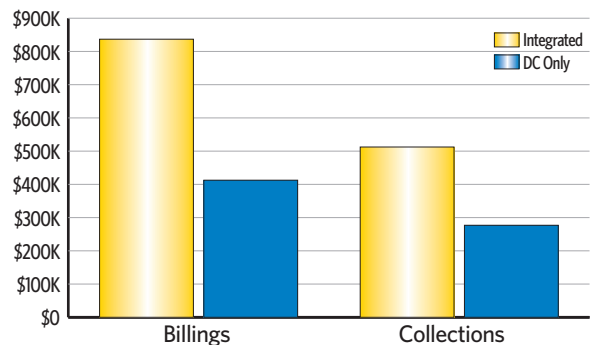
What we do know is that fewer solo chiropractors are joining integrated clinics. In 2011, 56.7 percent of solo DCs were part of integrated clinics, compared with 57.8 percent in 2010 and 68.2 percent in 2009.

Here is a breakdown of the numbers:

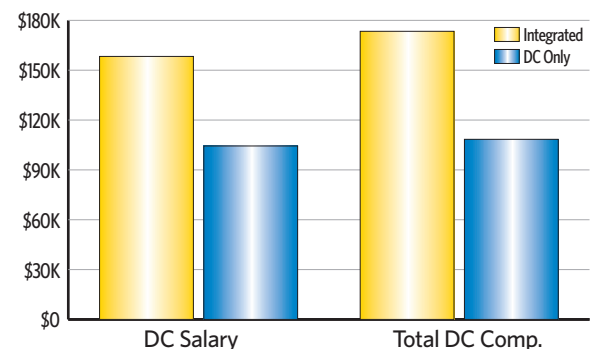
**Billings.** Integrated practices had billings of \$836,877 compared with \$691,952 in our 2010 survey. Solo DC billings in 2011 were \$412,561 compared with \$445,030 in 2010.

**Collections.** Integrated practice collections averaged \$512,437 compared with \$410,096 in 2010. Solo DC collections averaged \$276,927 in 2011 compared with \$276,789 in 2010.

DC vs. Integrated Healthcare Clinics: Comparison of Financials



A Look at Average DC Compensation



**Salaries and total compensation.** The biggest change came in the salaries and total compensation categories. In 2011, DCs' integrated practice salaries and total compensation both increased significantly from 2010.

Salaries for DCs in integrated clinics increased from \$95,694 in 2010 to \$158,296 in 2011. For DCs in solo clinics the average salary increased from \$84,369 in 2010 to \$104,396 in 2011.

Total compensation for unincorporated DCs is defined as earnings after tax-deductible expenses, but before income taxes.

For DCs in a professional corporation, it is the sum of salary, bonuses, and retirement/profit-sharing contributions made on their behalf.

For DCs in integrated clinics, the average total compensation was \$173,411, while solo clinics saw an average total compensation of \$108,402.

## **More data of interest**

**Practice label.** Despite an increased interest in the term "wellness" in recent years, this year's survey saw a decline in the percent of practices that label themselves "wellness centers." For integrated clinics, 28.5 percent of practices called themselves wellness centers compared with 36.9 percent in 2010. Likewise, 21.3 percent of solo clinics labeled themselves as wellness centers in 2011, compared with 25.3 percent last year.

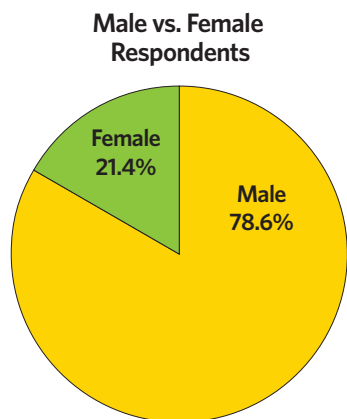
**Rural growth.** Integrated practices in rural areas increased tremendously from 2010 to 2011. This year, more than 32 percent of integrated clinics practiced in rural areas, compared with 16.7 percent last year.

**Specialties.** Our 2011 survey indicated a small decline in many specialty areas, with more respondents selecting the term "other" to indicate their practice niche. ■

# Gender roles

No matter where you go, or what you do, the role gender plays in society is always a hot topic. And it's no different for the chiropractic profession. For that reason, we always break down our survey results to show some important differences between the men and women who answer our survey.

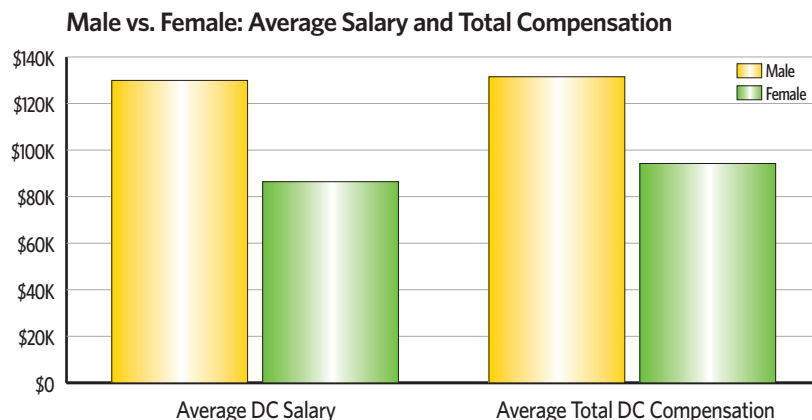
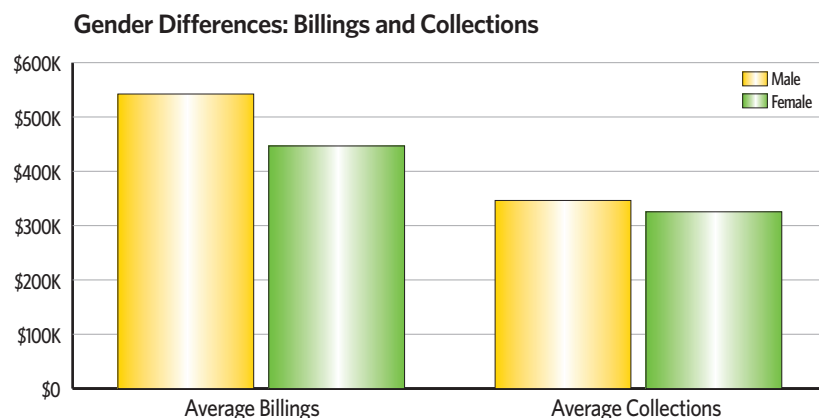
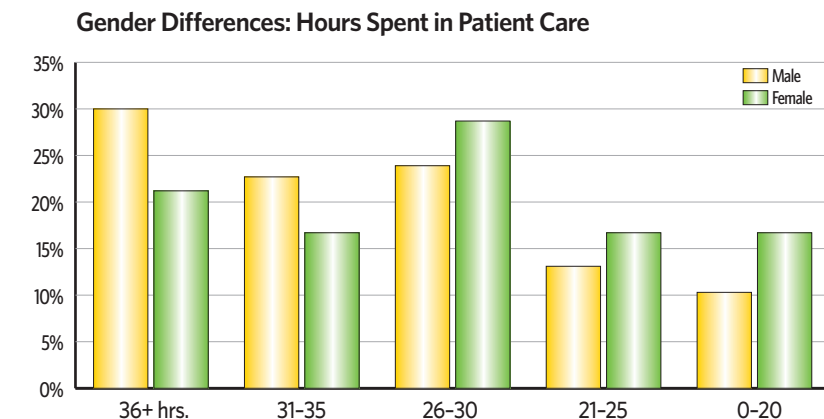
This year saw a slight decrease in female survey respondents (21.4 percent in 2011 to 22.8 percent in 2010). Although this number is down from last year, it is still significantly higher than in years past. In 2009, 16.4 percent were female; in 2008, 17.76 percent were female; and in 2007, 19.6 percent were female.



One thing remains the same, however, and that's the difference in average salaries between male and female DCs. The average salary for women was \$86,418 compared with \$129,925 for men, while the average total compensation for women was \$94,234 compared with \$131,492 for men.

## Other statistics:

**Patient hours.** This year's survey indicates women chiropractors spend fewer hours a week in patient care compared with their male counterparts. More than half of male respondents spend at least 31 hours a week in patient care, while only 37.9 percent of female respondents spend at least 31 hours.



Similarly, 10.3 percent of men spent 20 or fewer hours in patient care a week, while 16.7 percent of women spent 20 or fewer hours in patient care.

**Groups or partnerships.** A higher percentage of women than men are involved in a group or partnership, 27.2 percent compared with 25.2 percent,

respectively. However, a fewer number of women were involved in groups this year (27.2 percent) than last year (38.5).

**Marketing efforts.** Keeping in line with previous years, women spent less than men in terms of advertising. This year, women spent on average \$6,863 on advertising, while men spent \$10,444. ■



# Bringin' home the bacon

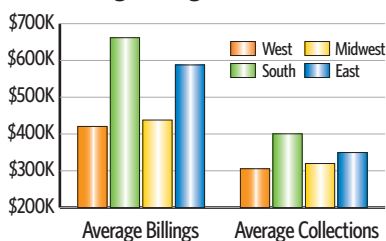
The South reigned supreme yet again in terms of billing, collections, and average salary. Respondents in southern states had an average of \$661,817 in billings, an average of \$400,483 in collections, and an average salary of \$127,926.

Despite bringing in the highest average salary, the South came in second in average total compensation with \$137,665 compared with \$145,718 for the East, which led all regions.

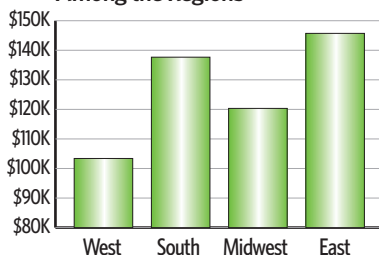
For billings and collections, respondents in the East came in second with average billings of \$587,761 and collections of \$349,625. The East came in third in terms of average DC salary (\$108,769). Respondents in the Midwest came in third when calculating the average billings (\$437,994), average collections (\$319,745), and average total compensation (\$120,333). The Midwest came in second in terms of average salary (\$117,632).

This year, DCs in the West had the lowest average billings (\$420,560), collections (\$305,624), total compensation (\$103,392), and average salary (\$101,201). ■

**Regional Comparisons of Average Billings and Collections**



**How Average Total DC Compensation Compares Among the Regions**



## Comparing the Regions

	West	South	Midwest	East
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>				
Average age	45.6	44.8	45.1	47.6
Male	78.3%	82.2%	77.7%	84.1%
Female	21.7%	17.8%	22.3%	15.9%
Solo	66.7%	63.2%	71.2%	63.5%
Group/partnership	21.8%	30.2%	20.2%	31.8%
Associate	7.2%	6.6%	5.7%	3.2%
Franchisee	4.3%	0.0%	2.9%	1.5%
Years in practice	15.7	16.4	16.7	18.9
Licenses	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.8
Clinics owned	1.2	1.0	0.9	1.1
<b>Location</b>				
Urban	36.3%	25.3%	18.3%	20.6%
Suburban	50.7%	60.7%	57.7%	63.5%
Rural	13.0%	14.0%	24.0%	15.9%
<b>Clinic Statistics</b>				
No. of employees	3.2	3.7	2.8	3.0
No. of FT employees	2.2	2.6	1.6	1.7
PVA	29.1	21.8	27.8	32.9
Patients per week	97.7	134.8	114.7	139.5
New patients/week	5.1	6.5	7.4	4.6
Cash only	25.4%	20.2%	16.5%	18.5%
Average billings	\$420,560	\$661,817	\$437,994	\$587,761
Average collections	\$305,624	\$400,483	\$319,745	\$349,625
<b>Expenses</b>				
Advertising	\$7,854	\$12,943	\$9,322	\$6,977
Malpractice insurance	\$2,866	\$2,328	\$2,244	\$2,523
Office lease or mortgage (yr)	\$23,374	\$28,370	\$21,249	\$23,503
<b>Salaries</b>				
Average associate	\$59,083	\$75,729	\$64,000	\$67,142
Average CA	\$26,652	\$30,359	\$23,664	\$26,069
Average LMT	\$28,369	\$27,389	\$22,133	\$19,666
Average DC	\$101,201	\$127,926	\$117,632	\$108,769
Average total DC comp.	\$103,392	\$137,665	\$120,333	\$145,718

# Suburbia stays strong

“Location, location, location,” isn’t just a popular term for real estate professionals — it can have a grave impact on chiropractors, too.

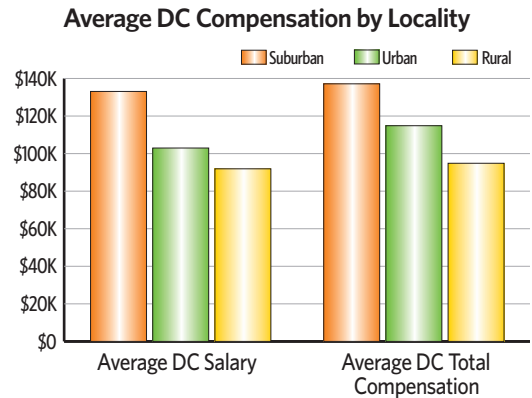
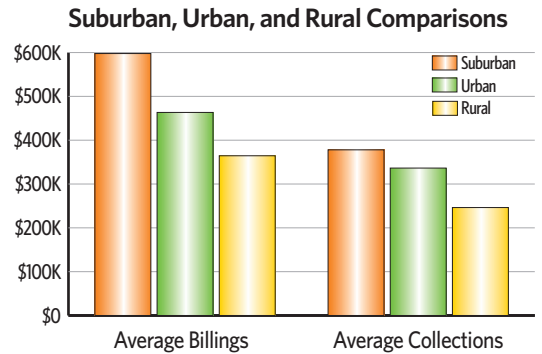
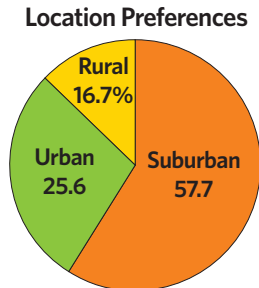
Where you locate your practice can make all the difference, which is why we asked survey respondents whether their clinics were located in a suburban, urban, or rural area.

Once again, suburban practitioners remained atop the “leader board” in many different categories. This year, 57.7 percent of respondents selected suburban as their practice area. Urban DCs followed with 25.6 percent and rural came in at 16.7 percent.

Unlike last year’s survey, suburban doctors also reported the highest billings and collections, averaging \$597,723 and \$377,987, respectively. The highest reimbursement rate, however, was recorded by urban doctors (72.6 percent).

As far as average annual salary, suburban DCs took the top spot (\$133,094), while urban DCs had an annual average salary of \$102,972 and rural practitioners averaged \$91,901.

According to our survey, suburban DCs also took home the highest average total compensation (\$137,150). Just under that, urban DCs came in at \$114,849, while rural practitioners reported a total compensation of \$94,885. ■



# Does age matter?

Do you ever wonder if you're working more than the average DC? Good news — we might have your answer.

In this year's survey, our respondents ranged in age from 25 to 76 and spent anywhere from six hours a week in patient care to more than 60.

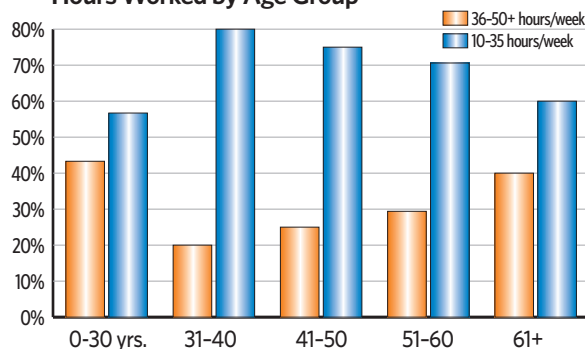
Our survey indicated that respondents up to age 30 spent the most amount of time in patient care, with 43.3 percent spending 36 or more hours a week. The "more than 60" group was not too far behind with 40 percent.

The group that spent the least amount of time with patients was the 31- to 40-year-old age group, with only 20 percent reporting they spend 36 or more hours with patients.

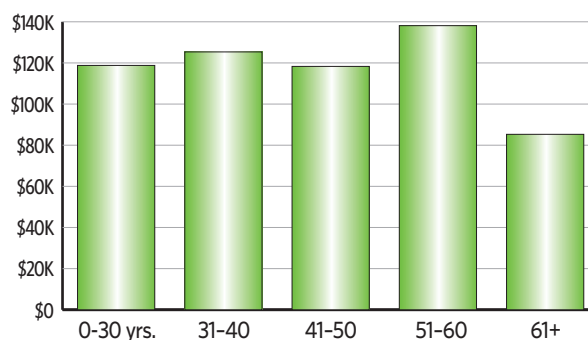
One change we saw this year was in average total compensation. In this year's survey, there didn't seem to be any direct connection between age and income.

The "more than 60" group saw the lowest average compensation at \$85,291, despite having the highest (\$130,842) last year. The average total compensation for the 51- to 60-year-old age group reported the highest total compensation at \$138,121, while the 31- to 40-year-old age group followed with \$125,352, the 30-year-old and below age group came in at \$118,788, and the 41- to 50-year-old age group rounded out the bottom at \$118,310. ■

Hours Worked by Age Group



Income by Age Group (Total DC Compensation)



# The business of benefits

Running a successful chiropractic practice takes patience, hard work, and maybe most importantly, a good staff to surround you. Are you showing your staff the appreciation they deserve by offering good benefits and fair salaries?

In this year's survey, we asked for salary information on full-time employees only — not part-timers. We defined "full time" as employees who work 30 hours or more a week.

Our results indicated that practices employ an average of 3.2 employees, with 2.5 qualifying as full time.

The average salary paid to those full-time employees was:

- ▶ CA — \$26,835;
- ▶ Licensed massage therapist (LMT) — \$27,124;
- ▶ Physical therapist (PT) — \$38,775;
- ▶ Associate — \$67,347; and
- ▶ DCs paid themselves \$115,513.

Despite what many believe, how

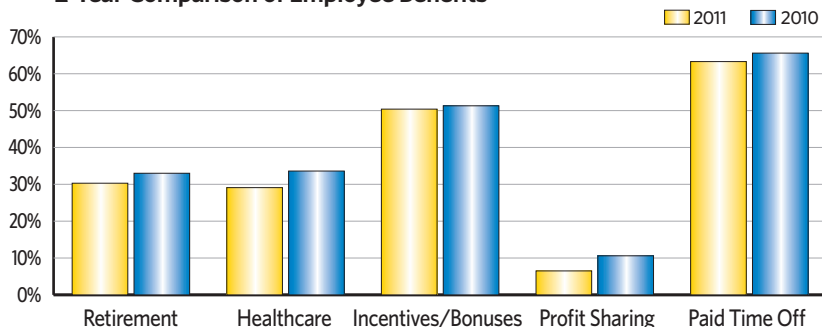
much you make annually is not always a determining factor in how well you enjoy your job. Benefits and bonuses play a huge role in ensuring employee satisfaction. And happy employees usually result in happy patients.

According to our survey, 30.3 percent of respondents indicated that they offered some type of retirement plan, compared with 33 percent last year. Those offering a healthcare plan also declined slightly, with 29.1 percent of respondents reporting that they offer a healthcare plan, compared with 32.6 percent last year.

Respondents offering paid time off — a combination of vacation and/or sick days — dropped to 63.4 percent compared with 65.5 percent last year and 66.2 percent in 2009.

Finally, those offering incentives and bonuses and/or profit sharing fell from 61.9 percent last year to 56.9 percent this year. ■

2-Year Comparison of Employee Benefits



## What's your specialty?

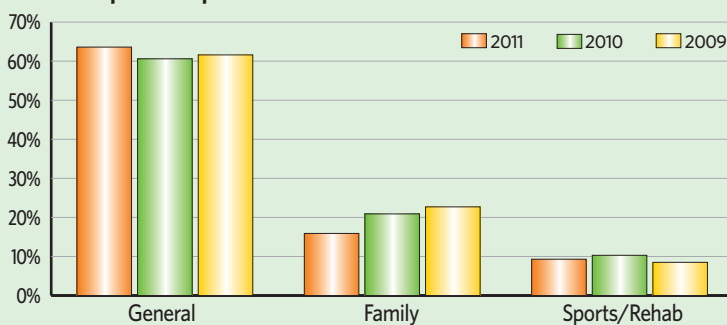
Finding your niche in the chiropractic profession is as important as anything you can do to set your practice apart from the rest.

When determining what — if anything — your practice will specialize in, ultimately determines how patients will perceive your value.

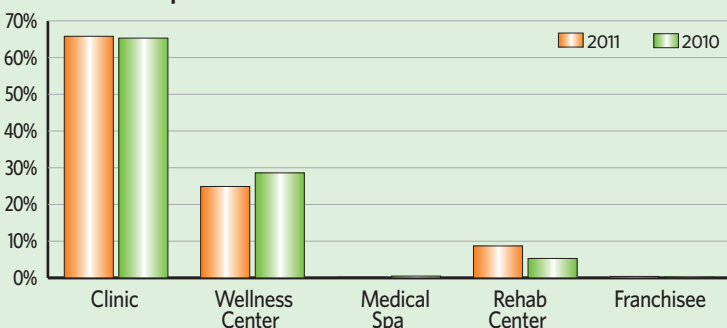
Respondents classifying their practice as "general" once again took the top spot with 63.6 percent. Family practice came in second (15.9 percent) and sports/rehab came in third (9.3 percent).

Although "clinic" was still the most popular label among respondents at 65.8 percent, rehab centers saw a slight increase from last year (8.7 percent compared with 5.3 percent, respectively). Wellness centers saw the second highest number of respondents at 24.9 percent, while franchisee and medical spa rounded out the bottom, both receiving less than 1 percent of responses.

Chiropractic Specialties



2-Year Comparison of Practice Labels



## Best sellers

Products are one of the best ways to bring additional revenue to your practice. And oftentimes, patients appreciate the expert opinion you can offer them in terms of what products they should use.

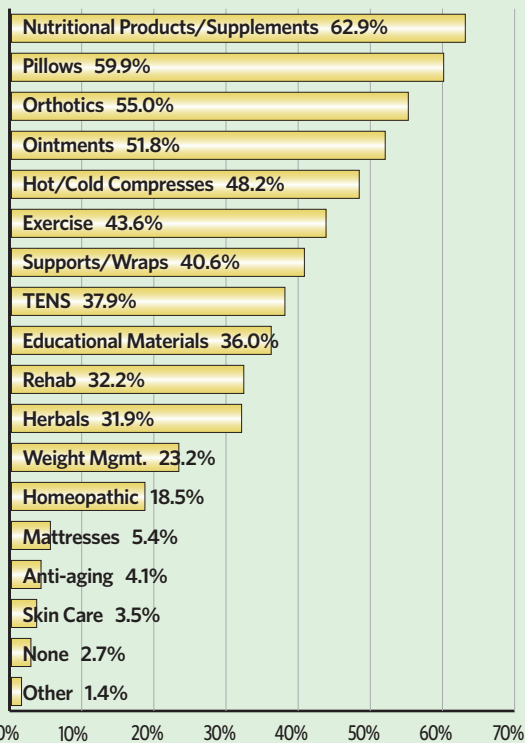
Nearly 80 percent of all respondents indicated that they sold at least one product in their practice.

Which products do respondents offer? Are you selling the same products as your colleagues? The top five products being sold include:

- ▶ **Nutritional products/supplements.** 62.9 percent, down from 76.5 percent last year;
- ▶ **Pillows.** 59.9 percent, compared with 69.1 percent last year;
- ▶ **Orthotics.** 55 percent, compared with 68.5 percent in 2010;
- ▶ **Ointments.** 51.8 percent, down from 70.1 percent last year; and
- ▶ **Hot/cold compresses.** 48.2 percent, down from 61.9 percent the previous year.

*Noteworthy:* The percent of chiropractors offering educational materials, such as books, increased to 36 percent, compared with 11.5 percent last year. That was the only increase in a specific product we saw this year.

Which Products Are Offered to Patients?



## Is cash king?

As a chiropractor, you're afforded many opportunities to bring revenue into your practice.

When breaking down sources of income, we changed things up a bit this year and asked you, first, to indicate the percent of your practice's revenue from a number of sources, including patient treatment.

From there, we asked you what percent of treatment is paid for by the following: cash from patients, individual or group health insurance, Medicare, auto insurance, Medicaid, Workers' Compensation, and other. ■

### Sources of Income

Patient	
Treatment	88.6%
Retail	7.8%
Diagnostics	5.9%
Other	3.6%
Consulting	2.9%

### Percent from Treatment

Insurance	42.2%
Cash	36.3%
Medicare	11.7%
Auto insurance	10.7%
Workers' comp.	5.2%
Medicaid	3.0%
Other	2.9%

## The price of doing business

In order to achieve a successful practice, it's important to maintain low overhead costs, while still bringing in good revenue. Our survey asked respondents to identify their expenses in three key areas — advertising, malpractice insurance, and office lease or mortgage.

**Advertising.** Average costs in this year's survey were \$9,666, representing a decrease from last year's costs of \$10,660.

**Malpractice insurance.** Respondents reported an average expense of \$2,413, pretty comparable with last year's costs of \$2,405.

**Office lease or mortgage.** Average costs were \$24,114, a decrease from \$26,146 in 2010. ■

### Major Practice Expenses

	2011	2010
Advertising	\$9,666	\$10,660
Malpractice insurance	\$2,413	\$2,405
Office lease or mortgage (yr)	\$24,114	\$26,146

# The specialist edge

Employing a specialist in your clinic is more beneficial than you might think. Not only does it add stability and value to your practice, but it may also boost your bottom line. Moreover, it helps your practice appeal to a wider range of patients.

A large percentage of survey respondents this year said they employed at least one specialist in their clinic — whether a licensed massage therapist (LMT), physical therapist (PT), acupuncturist, medical doctor (MD or DO), nutritionist, trainer, or something completely different.

Clinics employing specialists see more patients per week (126.6, compared with 106.9 patients per week in nonspecialist clinics); bill more (average of \$582,171 versus \$303,827); and collect more (average of \$399,023 versus \$222,727).

As a result, clinics employing specialists averaged a higher total compensation than those practices without specialists (\$140,711 and \$93,108, respectively).

Practices employing specialists also attract a higher number of new patients per week (7.6) compared to nonspecialist clinics (4.5).

## Modalities offered


While most of the respondents have at least one specialist on staff, the most common specialist was the LMT, with more than 80 percent indicating they have an LMT in their clinic.

Other popular specialists include:

- ▶ Acupuncturist, 26.7 percent;
- ▶ Nutritionist, 21.1 percent;
- ▶ Trainer, 12.4 percent;
- ▶ MD/DO, 8.7 percent; and
- ▶ PT, 8.0 percent.

And 10.6 percent of respondents indicated “other” for specialists they have in their clinic.

Respondents also reported that they offer a wide range of modalities, even if they do not have specialists who provide them. These modalities include:

- ▶ Physical therapy, 65.5 percent;
- ▶ Exercise, 56.3 percent;
- ▶ Nutrition, 47.3 percent;
- ▶ Weight loss, 22.7 percent;
- ▶ Laser therapy, 22.7 percent;
- ▶ Decompression, 27.2 percent;
- ▶ Massage, 18.1 percent;
- ▶ Acupuncture, 12.7 percent;
- ▶ Homeopathy, 12.7 percent; and
- ▶ Other, 9.9 percent. 

## How Specialists Boost Your Income

	Specialists	No Specialists
Mean Total Compensation . . . . .	\$140,711	\$93,108
<b>Expenses</b>		
Advertising . . . . .	\$12,592	\$6,360
Malpractice insurance . . . . .	\$5,684	\$1,991
Office lease/mortgage (yr) . . . . .	\$25,923	\$17,241
<b>Salary</b>		
Associate . . . . .	\$65,422	\$63,000
CA . . . . .	\$28,381	\$25,579
LMT . . . . .	\$27,504	N.A.
PT . . . . .	\$121,010	\$47,000
DC . . . . .	\$131,768	\$91,062