Affirmation and Rebirth of the Chiropractic Profession, Part 2

Setting New Standards in Office-Based Musculoskeletal Care and Health Promotion

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So, why is it that a profession with so much current promise and future potential is so undervalued, underutilized and underfunded? In order to understand and describe the limitations placed on the chiropractic profession, and the limitations placed on patients who could benefit from enhanced access to chiropractic care, we have to look at limiting forces that exist inside and outside the profession.

Limitations From Outside

The American Medical Association (AMA) and other powerful pharmacosurgical groups conspired to destroy the chiropractic profession,\textsuperscript{55,56} the osteopathic profession\textsuperscript{57} and the naturopathic profession, and hence limit Americans’ right to choose their health care. The details of these events and the resulting court order are well-documented and widely accessible.\textsuperscript{58-61} There can be no doubt that these illegal actions by the AMA and its co-conspirators set the chiropractic profession back considerably by measures of income, professional advancement, cultural authority, esteem and internal cohesion. Thus, by each one of these measures, the illegal AMA conspiracy was and continues to be a remarkable success.

Even today, the AMA is spearheading nationwide actions to further limit the practices of non-allopathic professionals.\textsuperscript{62} This is a problem in Texas, for example, where the well-funded Texas Medical Association recently sued the Texas Board of Chiropractic Examiners to enforce restrictions in the scope of chiropractic practice.\textsuperscript{63} Medical journals and associations continue to defame the chiropractic profession, even when the scientific bases for such defamatory actions are unfounded.\textsuperscript{64-66} Insurance companies and so-called “health maintenance organizations” limit chiropractic reimbursement and coverage, and thereby restrict patients’ access to care and the individual practitioner’s ability to survive and thrive. Since a profession can never exceed the average success of its members, different groups collectively succeed in restricting the profession
by restricting the practices of individual doctors. Defamation and marginalization of the profession undermine attempts to gain federal and private funding for better faculty, facilities and research, and lack of these resources promotes additional devaluation and marginalization; thus, a vicious cycle is created.

Limitations From Inside

The intensity of the AMA’s conspiracy forced early chiropractors to adopt the use of non-medical jargon so that chiropractic practice would not be misconstrued as "practicing medicine without a license," thereby saving chiropractors from the medical witch-hunt that generally aimed to jail the practitioner and burn their practice and reputation at the stake. 67 Rejection of medical concepts and terminology eventually morphed from "anti-medical" to "anti-scientific" in some chiropractic colleges and organizations, such that a sizable and vocal faction of chiropractic graduates entered practice with a disdain for words and phrases like diagnosis, treatment, spinal manipulation and lab tests. These graduates were led to believe that the chiropractic profession did nothing more than "analyze" and "adjust" the spine, and that using lab tests and nutritional supplements made them "too medical."

Thankfully, authentic chiropractic holism is being revitalized in individual practitioners and the profession. Obviously, we as a profession can waste no time or attention on anti-scientific dogmatists who retard the advancement of our profession under the guise of a limited and self-serving interpretation of "chiropractic philosophy," which often devolves into a kind of "chiropractic evangelism," based on the belief that the "adjustment cures all." Anyone who advocates that the chiropractic profession is concerned only with the spine - to the exclusion of the rest of the body, and other factors that affect health - has misunderstood, misrepresented and limited our profession.

The Rebirth of the Chiropractic Profession

The time has come for the chiropractic profession to reaffirm and reunite with its original holistic identity. D.D. Palmer wrote, "The human body represents the actions of three laws-spiritual, mechanical, and chemical-united as one triune. As long as there is perfect union of these three, there is health." 68 The chiropractic profession has been holistic and "integrative" since its very inception. 69

Four of the biggest threats to the American public health are 1) skyrocketing medical costs, resulting in bankruptcy and health care inaccessibility; 70 2) a nationwide shortage of physicians, further contributing to increased costs and inaccessibility; 3) lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension; and 4)
medical iatrogenesis, conservatively estimated to be the fourth to sixth leading cause of death in America.\textsuperscript{71}

Increased utilization of chiropractic services would have a salutary effect on each and every one of these problems. The modern definition of the chiropractic profession clearly affirms and articulates our holistic tenets, and our practices should reflect this diagnostic and therapeutic diversity: "Doctors of chiropractic are physicians who consider man as an integrated being and give special attention to the physiological and biochemical aspects, including structural, spinal, musculoskeletal, neurological, vascular, psychological, nutritional, visceral, emotional and environmental relationships." \textsuperscript{72}

The American public has made its position very clear: They want nonmedical and nonsurgical health care options; they prefer safe and effective natural treatments over expensive and often hazardous drugs and surgery. The chiropractic profession is uniquely positioned to take on an empowered role in the American health care system. Chiropractic doctors should embrace their holistic heritage and provide the American people with the safe and effective integrative health care it demands and deserves. Public demand is on our side.\textsuperscript{73} The research is on our side.\textsuperscript{2} The days of "submission for survival" are past.\textsuperscript{67} The time for action, reaffirmation, and authentic and assertive empowerment has arrived.

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until merger with allopathic medicine was the only remaining strategy - a strategy which the medical profession believed would eventually destroy the osteopathic profession. In his review of osteopathic history, Gevitz* writes, "... the M.D.'s gradually came to believe that the only way to destroy osteopathy was through the absorption of D.O.'s, much as the homeopaths and eclectics had been swallowed up early in the century." Even today, the AMA continues to list osteopathic medicine under "alternative medicine,"** even though several osteopathic medical colleges have consistently provided training that is superior to most "conventional" medical schools.*** See the following references: *Gevitz N. The D.O.'s: Osteopathic Medicine in America. Johns Hopkins University Press; 1991; pages 100-103. **American Medical Association. Report 12 of the Council on Scientific Affairs (A-97). Full Text http://www.amaassn.org/ama/pub/category/13638.html on Feb. 15, 2005. *** Special report. America’s best graduate schools. Schools of Medicine. The top schools: primary care. US News World Rep. 2004 Apr 12;136(12):74.

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