



NEWS / PROFESSION

A DC-MD Romance?

SADLY, ONLY AT CHRISTMAS

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As characters, chiropractors rarely have much of a presence in motion pictures and television. The first instance I can remember was in the 1990 movie, "[Jacob's Ladder](#)," in which Danny Aiello plays "Louis," a very friendly and supportive chiropractor. In the movie, Louis cares for the main character, "Jacob," a Vietnam War veteran suffering from PTSD; and even carries him out of a hospital where he was apparently about to undergo some sort of nightmarish surgery. (Talk about fiction mirroring reality.)¹

The only other main character to play a doctor of chiropractic that I am aware of was Jon Cryer's "Alan" in the TV show, "Two and a Half Men," which originally aired from 2003-2015. Sadly, Cryer's character was often the brunt of jokes demeaning the chiropractic profession.

Thankfully, a new Christmas movie that aired last season has risen above the bad jokes and unfortunately stereotypes. Produced by Great American Media, [the movie](#), "'Twas the Text Before Christmas," aired on its Great American Family channel from Oct. 21 through the Christmas season.²

The main characters in the film are played by [well-known](#) Christmas movie veterans Merrit Patterson and Trevor Donovan, who have migrated over from the Hallmark Channel in the past few years. If you are a fan of family-friendly Christmas movies, you will quickly recognize them.³

While the plot is highly predictable, the treatment of the characters is refreshing. The movie opens with "Addie" (played by Patterson) entering a busy office with coffee. Through the dialogue, we learn that this is Addie's busy chiropractic practice, complete with her college degrees on the wall. Her practice is aptly named "Wellness Chiropractic."

Donovan plays "James," a "traveling doctor" who's usually off serving in Third-World countries, but always comes home for Christmas with his mom and family. The two meet and spend three Christmases together through an errant text from James' mom to Addie.

On the second Christmas, as they are cooking together, James reaches for something up high and exhibits neck / shoulder pain. Addie asks to take a look, stating, "Even doctors have back pain." They are interrupted by James' family in the course of palpation, to which the embarrassed James replies, "She's a chiropractor."

James asks Addie to look at his neck at their next Christmas encounter. Again, they are interrupted before Addie can do much. Needless to say, the movie closes with them confessing their love and sharing a few kisses in the last four minutes, as is the tradition for the genre.

Having had some limited experience in script writing, I can tell you that every line and every direction are deliberate. Characters are always formed and the story is always told with the audience in mind. The typical audience for this movie is predominately women, mostly millennials and Gen Xers. In fact, these types of movies [can outperform](#) the major networks on Saturday evenings during the nine-week Christmas season.⁴

In this movie, the writers made some interesting choices in the characters and storyline. They framed a medical doctor and a chiropractor as the love interests, with only the chiropractor given the opportunity (twice) to display her professional expertise. The writers also gave the medical doctor neck pain, rather than low back pain (the latter of which would have been the safer choice).

While quietly modest in its presentation, "Twas the Text Before Christmas" is a (dare I use the term) hallmark example of a movie with a chiropractor main character presented in a very positive way through a movie that endears itself to its target audience.

But it is actually more than that. I see this movie as an incredibly tangible result of the past 20 years of effort by the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress. Educating the consumer public includes educating those whose job it is to inform and entertain the public. This group of script writers, producers and directors is clearly comfortable with their ability to display a DC on screen. Hopefully we will see more in the year to come.

References

1. "Chiropractic's Emerging Image." *Dynamic Chiropractic*, December 1990.
2. "'Twas the Text Before Christmas." Great American Family, 2023.
3. Wang KLC. "The Complete List of Hallmark Channel Stars Who've Moved to Great American Family, Including Candace Cameron Bure!" *Parade*, Nov. 20, 2023.
4. Berr J. "Hallmark's Christmas Movies Are Predictably Popular With Viewers." *Forbes*, Jan. 11, 2019.

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