

Resolutions, Again...

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While we won't forget the dramatic events of September 11, it's interesting to see how soon we forget other events that dominated the media's attention. Remember January 2000 and Y2K? That now seems like a decade ago, but the entire world of commerce was in a state of "virtual" nervous breakdown. Concern over preserving data integrity and the ramifications of Y2K failure placed information systems personnel in such demand that it was nearly impossible to find one available at a reasonable price.

Attorneys had a field day over whom to sue and for what, thus creating an entire field of cyber-legal challenges. Computer companies touting their products as being Y2K-compliant, and the list of preparations for disaster recovery was endless. Fortunately, there was no disaster, but the price tag in dollars for preparation was in the billions, and the cost of personal and corporate anxiety cannot be calculated.

Y2K is only a faint memory now, but the concern for its potential dominated and pervaded every commercial business with a fear unlike any we have seen before. Small banks and insurance companies were unquestionably forced to sell to larger entities that had the wherewithal to become compliant, and the legal acumen to ward off challenges in the event of failure; many were affected directly or indirectly by the Y2K fear.

Let us also not forget January of 2001, only one year ago. The U.S. was paralyzed by the most hotly contested presidential race in history. The endless reports and speculation dominated the media for months. If the presidential race of 2001 were made into a movie, everyone would say, "It could only happen in the movies."

There was a down-to-the-wire race with only a few thousand votes separating the candidates; a state with challenges to the ballots whose governor (the brother of one of the candidates) helping to decide the election; the Supreme Court drawn into a decision that could have divided the country for decades; the media literally out of control and manufacturing news rather than reporting it came to dominate the airwaves for months; and the results of the election, declaring George W. Bush president of the United States. The election was over, but the reluctance of the country to fully accept its results was evident in subtle and not-so-subtle ways throughout the country.

History and events often determine leadership, and the country rallied around the leadership demonstrated by this narrowly elected president through the manner in which he handled the September 11 attacks. He was decisive; visionary; compassionate; eloquent; and resolute in his determination that America would not be beaten into submission by an act of terrorism on our soil. He declared a "war on terrorism," and the country began a long and systematic mission to rid the world of terrorism.

It is sometimes good to regress just a short time in history and realize how the issues we thought were so significant often pale by comparison in retrospect to the events of the moment.

The history lesson of the moment for chiropractic is quite simple: The profession, without being too melodramatic, is engaged in a war of survival - one that will determine the very future of our profession; the economic survival of every individual practitioner; the availability of chiropractic services to be delivered to millions of people in a free and unencumbered fashion; the opportunity to provide chiropractic services to those in the military; and the ability of our colleges to continue to exist as viable educational institutions.

The outcome of this war will determine if those young men and women who chose chiropractic as a career will be able to serve humanity with a different paradigm of health care and enjoy the simple freedom of being a doctor of chiropractic with equal protection and equal rights afforded other health care disciplines.

In 2002, we are just beginning to heat up the legal discovery process in a lawsuit against Trigon Blue Cross/Blue Shield. History will show that this lawsuit will be one of the most significant efforts the profession has ever embarked upon. To the chiropractic profession it is analogous to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the seminal case that ended segregation in the schools.

The profession has an unparalleled opportunity to win this legal challenge, and truly deliver a fatal blow to the discriminatory practices that have plagued our profession for years. We can accomplish this enormous task through the orderly process afforded to Americans by our legal system, which provides a level playing field to those who seek fair and equitable redress. The powerful medical trade associations that have enabled a monopoly to survive and dominate the health care system are on equal ground in our courts with those whom they have suppressed. The monolithic trade associations, with their budgets that rival small countries, are made to respond to legal challenges and discovery that will uncover truths we inherently know. From previous legal action, chiropractic has discovered and uncovered the Machiavellian methods used by those who conspired to vilify, disparage, denigrate and discriminate against chiropractors.

These very same groups profess concern for the health and welfare of the citizens of the United States, and yet have disenfranchised millions of Americans from seeking health care that is nonallopathic. They have attempted to derail a movement by society toward a wellness model of health care by providing deterrents and barriers to those who seek lower-cost, more conservative chiropractic and other nonmedical care.

Let your imagination run wild, and attempt to imagine what the headlines could be in January of 2003. Imagine these headlines:

- Chiropractors Successful in Law suit- 80,000,000 in U.S. to Receive Chiropractic Care
- Chiropractors Beat the Blues with a Victory in Court
- Chiropractors' Court Action to Mandate Equality and Freedom of Access for U.S.

What a vision for 2003 - and it is possible. What is needed is a New Year's resolution by every DC in America to resolve that they will support the effort to end the tyranny of discrimination. We also need the money to continue to pursue the challenge to uncover facts that each and every chiropractor knows in his or her heart, and a resolve not to give up until it is over.

Many ask, "What will it take to move the profession off dead center?" I am filled with more optimism than I have ever been, because I truly believe this is a cause that will rally every doctor of chiropractic and provide the emotional thread to bond us together in this united fight. As I travel across the country, I sense a spark that has ignited a determination that "we are mad as hell, and we're not going to take it any more." The events of September 11 have provided a rekindling of a spirit of determination that will motivate our profession with the rugged individualism that enabled the early pioneers to survive, despite overwhelming odds.

We need to send a message to those who will continue to discriminate, eliminate, differentiate and eventually try to eradicate the chiropractic profession, because they do not wish to dismantle their monopolistic hold on health care. The U.S. health care system is in chaos, and no bandage will close the economic hemorrhage evident in every aspect of the current model.

Perhaps we need a New Year's resolution that is not fancy or eloquent, but rather pragmatic and practical. What will it take? I offer the answer in 10 two-letter words: If it is to be, it is up to me!

We cannot expect anyone else to fight our battles for us; we cannot expect our colleagues to continue to do it for us; and we cannot expect that our enemies will give up the quest to keep us down. Each DC must feel that sense of personal commitment to a cause that is greater than the moment, and to be moved by the ultimate vision of what this will mean to the country, our patients and our profession.

Best wishes for a happy new year, and perhaps in 2002 there will be a renewed commitment within the chiropractic community to end the decades of discriminatory activity. We can do it again!

Send your dollars to the ACA Legal Action Fund, 1701 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209. Join the battle.

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