

How is Your Chiropractic Vision?

Richard Brassard, DC

When I was invited, as president-elect of Texas Chiropractic College (TCC), to write an article about my vision for the chiropractic profession and for the college, I couldn't help but think about the similarities between our physical ability to see and our philosophical capacity to have a vision. We don't normally think about our vision. Most of us take it for granted unless it needs to be corrected. A fortunate few are blessed with perfect vision, while the rest of us are either nearsighted or farsighted.

Are we as doctors of chiropractic nearsighted or farsighted? There are those who have established practices on tried-and-true chiropractic techniques and may have developed tunnel vision: an unwillingness to look beyond their current scope of practice. Others have extended peripheral vision and include services such as nutrition counseling, acupuncture or herbal therapy in their practices. A few, with insight born of necessity and wisdom, have built multidisciplinary practices that integrate the best of chiropractic care and its numerous subspecialties with the services of our allopathic colleagues.

The latter of these scenarios at one time would have been my vision for the chiropractic profession. It is no longer a vision, but rather a reality, one that doctors on opposing sides of the caduceus are quickly recognizing.

Bob Dylan wrote years ago:

*"Your old road is rapidly agin'...
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand, for the times they are a-
changin'."*

Who would have imagined in the 1960s when this song was popular that one day the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine would be created at the National Institutes of Health? Who would have believed that one day a consortium of academic health centers for integrative medicine, at places such as the University of Minnesota, the University of Maryland, Harvard, Duke, Stanford and Georgetown would be established? "For the times they are a-changin'."

Change doesn't come easily, and ours is not front-page news. Those who know anything about the history of chiropractic are aware of the great sacrifices that have been and are still being made to keep the profession alive and viable. DCs have not been alone in the struggle. According to the Alternative Medicine Foundation, Inc., in Bethesda, Maryland: "More than half of the United States population, approximately 125 million Americans, suffers from a chronic illness - conditions such as arthritis, allergies, pain, hypertension, depression, and digestive problems. Conventional Western medicine often cannot provide satisfactory solutions; so, people with chronic conditions increasingly turn to alternative therapies ... to improve their quality of life." Many of these people have had to battle with insurance companies and their own physicians, in addition to their illnesses, to find relief.

As the great wave of "baby-boomers" reaches middle age, many are turning to alternative medicine

to maintain wellness instead of seeking treatment for chronic illness. The loud knocking on the door of the medicine cabinet by those who sought treatment by both conventional and alternative medical practitioners could not go unheeded for long. As both professions evolve, it is apparent that integrative medicine, incorporating the best of allopathic and complementary medicine, has become the treatment of choice for millions.

Change

I'm reminded of an article by psychologist Bill Crawford, PhD, of Houston. He wrote: "There are two ways to change ...the pain of the problem or the love of the solution. Each affirms a different reality, and thus creates a different experience of life." Some will only make a change when a situation becomes too difficult or painful. Others have a vision and make changes to bring that vision into reality.

Dr. Crawford adds: "The good news is that making changes based upon this 'solution-focused versus problem-focused' perspective allows us to change sooner, because it doesn't require that we feel really bad before we alter our course." Chiropractic and allopathic doctors who are still fence sitting about widening their scope of practice to include integrative medicine might do well to take this perspective of change into consideration.

My vision for TCC aligns accordingly with my vision for the chiropractic profession. We say in our college literature, "The future is now," which has been our thinking for a long time. Interns in their final two trimesters are eligible to participate in our hospital rotations program, which was the first of its kind when it was initiated in 1985. More than 25 doctors in private practice, located at numerous hospitals and medical centers in the area (including the world-renowned Texas Medical Center) participate in the program. TCC has yearly renewable affiliation agreements with Baylor College of Medicine; the University of Texas System; the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston; and the Harris County Hospital District. That includes just about every hospital in southeast Texas!

However, the interns don't have to leave the campus to get valuable clinical experience. In July 2000, we opened the Moody Health Center, an 18,000-square-foot state-of-the-art clinic that models a private practice, yet also functions as a teaching facility. This was accomplished by designing the clinic with five distinct treating areas, each managed by a faculty doctor. By combining the latest advances in the design of health care training facilities with proven private practice designs, the Moody Health Center is one of the most advanced facilities in chiropractic education.

The TCC administration is investigating several opportunities that will increase our involvement and visibility in the field of integrative medicine. We have nationally recognized faculty members with specialties as diverse as pain management; radiology; sports rehabilitation; and microbiology, who are more than capable of educating our students as effective, portal-of-entry health care providers.

I see the chiropractic profession and TCC as being on the cutting edge of health care in this country. There is a proven need for our involvement in integrative medicine. This is my vision for doctors of chiropractic, and my mission as I prepare to assume the presidency of Texas Chiropractic College.

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