

We're Not Alone

Donald M. Petersen Jr., BS, HCD(hc), FICC(h), Publisher

Of all the quips and comments that have been voiced regarding the situation (an accreditation crisis and numerous leadership changes) at Life University's College of Chiropractic, no one seems to be talking much about what effect these events could have on the image of the chiropractic profession, and on chiropractic education in particular. The potential of the largest chiropractic college in the world facing extinction is tragic and sobering to those of us who have been around for awhile, but what about the rest of the world? Does it really care what happens in chiropractic?

I believe the answer is "Yes." The world is watching, and what happens to Life University will reflect on all of us.

You don't think so? Consider the following:

- There are 976 online magazine articles containing the word "chiropractic."
- CNN.com has 25 chiropractic or related articles on its website.
- ChiroWeb.com hosts websites for doctors of chiropractic; those websites enjoyed 22,649 unique visits over July.
- ChiroWeb.com had 332,714 unique visits in July, resulting in 1,073,480 page views (or 11,016,096 hits - for those who count hits). An estimated two-thirds of those were from nonchiropractors.
- The *To Your Health* email newsletter has 109,132 subscribers looking for more information on chiropractic and wellness. TYH is growing at a rate of approximately 2,000 subscribers per month.

People are interested in chiropractic as a form of health care and as a profession.

DCs can no longer rely on their relationships with people in their community to determine their neighbors' opinions about chiropractic. We're in the news, on PBS,¹ in *Biography* magazine,² and on over 841,000 pages on the internet. Take a look at the list of sources veterans use to determine if they will utilize complementary and alternative medicine for their health care needs. (Please see "Almost Half of U.S. Veterans Use CAM" on the front page of this issue.) While the advice of family and friends is listed first, newspaper articles and medical references follow close behind.

Ten years ago, an article in a major publication about chiropractic was big news. In those days, most of the articles were negative, and called for an aggressive response by the profession. That response would often cool the publication's desire to publish any articles relating to chiropractic.

The controversy surrounding Life has been restricted to local news sources like the *Marrietta Daily News*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and WXIA-TV in Atlanta. But this will change. Sooner or later, a national news source will run something that could cause significant erosion to our image. Chiropractic is in a small, usually dim spotlight, one that can shine brightly when bad news is at hand.

These next 12 months may be the time for all of us - every DC, chiropractic association and

organization - to work just a little harder to communicate the positive aspects of chiropractic and its immense contribution to the public. We may want to focus whatever advertising budgets we have at communicating an accurate picture of the "up-and-coming" health care profession that chiropractic has proven to be over the last 107 years.

The dilemma at Life College could serve to dissuade interested applicants from enrolling in any chiropractic college. Some in the profession might see this as a sign of the decline in the popularity of chiropractic in general. While the situation at Life is part of our collective image, it should not be viewed as a prognosis of our future or a reflection of the state of chiropractic in the U.S.

References

1. PBS airs flawed program on chiropractic. *Dynamic Chiropractic* July 15, 2002.
www.chiroweb.com/archives/20/15/16.html.
2. Biography magazine spotlights chiropractic. *Dynamic Chiropractic* July 15, 2002.
www.chiroweb.com/archives/20/15/10.html.

Donald M. Petersen Jr.,BS,HCD(hc),FICC(h)
Editor/Publisher of Dynamic Chiropractic
don@mpamedia.com

OCTOBER 2002