

Cleaning up the Internet

IT DOES HAVE IT'S BENEFITS

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While many people may be lamenting the "last round-up" of the "dot-com cowboys," I, for one, am not. Many of these "cowboys" were involved in industries and professions they didn't understand or care much about. In their quest for riches, they sold "discounted" products at premium prices; claimed to provide customer service, which was really nonexistent; and flooded the internet with millions of web pages of flawed information. Their ignorance of chiropractic and other forms of "alternative care" rivaled their lack of business acumen, and created a volatile combination that led to their quick demise.

As you will note in the latest news reports, the number of pure dot-com failures is still going strong, with 54 companies closing their doors in May and 269 going out of business since the beginning of last year.¹ There is a website dedicated to tracking these failures.² Among those formerly in the health information/commerce business were:

PlanetRX.com
IEmily.com
Gazoontite.com
Clickmango.com
Healthshop.com
MotherNature.com
More.com

Still others are holding on by the "skin of their teeth."

It was last year at this time that I noted three prominent health websites that generally ignored chiropractic or presented misinformation.³ A review of these same sites notes little positive change:

- DrKoop.com contains only three articles concerning chiropractic (down from the 26 articles I found last year). The title of one article, "Chiropractor - Doctor of Chiropractic Medicine Profession (DC)," reveals just how chiropractically ignorant and medically biased the website is.
- Healthscout.com, since February 13, 1999, has increased the number of pages mentioning chiropractic from three to a "whopping" 20 (an average of less than one per month). Virtually none of these articles were really "about" chiropractic.
- OnHealth.com has been gobbled up by WebMD. Chiropractic is only mentioned 112 times on the website. It is hard to say how many pages there are, because many pages are listed more than once in the search results.

Several follow-up articles in *DC* have included warnings against getting involved with start-up internet companies that want to gain access to your patients, or of getting involved in what could prove to be illegal e-commerce schemes.^{4,5,6,7} Thankfully, most of these companies are now gone, or looking like they soon will be. And while their failures don't make the newspapers (too small and privately funded), their absence removes much of the confusion that has typified the web's approach to chiropractic.

Included in the list of failed businesses are a number of good-intentioned online chiropractic companies that have also gone under. But most would have to agree that they probably would have failed eventually, based on their limited funding.

This now leaves just a few chiropractic websites, of which *ChiroWeb.com* is easily the one most often visited. ChiroWeb.com enjoys almost 300,000 unique visits each month, approximately 80 percent of which are from consumers. With over 10,000 pages of information and a complete directory of DCs around the world, ChiroWeb is educating and referring a great number of consumers to their local doctors of chiropractic.

In addition, our patient/consumer e-mail newsletter (*To Your Health*) now has over 51,000 subscribers. (Please see "[Consumers Demanding Reliable Information about Chiropractic](#)".) This number is increasing by almost 1,500 each week. Consumers that subscribe to the e-mail newsletter are referred to participating DCs in their areas. Then, their local DCs are featured at the beginning of each newsletter every two weeks. (For more information on how to participate, please call 888-352-8180.)

As the "dot-com cowboys" are learning, the internet is not about getting rich. It is about providing solid information and good customer service. In our case, it is about three things:

1. providing information services that keep you informed and encourage open communication between DCs;
2. offering web tools that will help you educate and communicate with your patients and prospective patients; and
3. teaching consumers the value of chiropractic care and referring them to their local doctor of chiropractic.

So, while the number of failed web companies continues to grow, we can say *hasta la vista* to the "dot-com cowboys" who put money ahead of all else. Ideally, after they've "hit the trail" and the dust settles, the only websites that have any substantial information about chiropractic will be those that are committed to the profession, providing consumers with accurate information about chiropractic and its many benefits.

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