

Making the Right Adjustment

If you ask me why I became a chiropractor, I can tell you about my desire to help improve the quality of health in my community without the use of medications and surgery. I can tell you about the chiropractor in my town who broadened my understanding of the philosophy of chiropractic by introducing me to subluxations and function. He told me that I could continue to live with headaches, or I could live without them. The choice was mine. Having headaches since the age of five made me choose the latter.

I'm sure many chiropractors have similar stories that they share with their patients, neighbors, students and friends. These stories and the everyday chiropractic success stories from our patients help keep our offices alive.

While we busy ourselves with day-to-day office operations, removing subluxations and getting sick people well, there is a concerted effort for other health professionals to own the art and science of chiropractic. If we do not become part of the research that will validate our existence, our profession will surely perish.

I remember the first chiropractic philosophy class I took in my first trimester of chiropractic school. References were often made to the osteopathic college across the street. We were told that Andrew Still founded osteopathy in 1874, years before D.D. Palmer accomplished his first adjustment. The difference between chiropractic and osteopathy, our teacher said, was the specificity of the dynamic thrust. However, our teacher would also tell us the osteopaths had given up the study of their foundation (manipulation) to join the medical establishment in the middle 1900s.

On November 4th, 1999, a research study was published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. The conclusion of the study sent a chill through my spine (no pun intended): "Osteopathic manual care and standard medical care have similar clinical results in patients with subacute low back pain. However, the use of medication is greater with standard care."

In other words, manipulation performed by an osteopath works as well as, if not better than, medication prescribed for back pain. In addition, there are certain osteopathic schools that offer dual-degree programs that allow students of osteopathy to obtain a master of science in nutrition (MSN) and a doctor of osteopathy (DO) degree simultaneously. It is important to note that the osteopaths gave up just enough of their philosophy to become indistinguishable from their medical counterparts while retaining enough to emerge today as the leaders in natural, holistic health care.

The time is now for us to unite and form one cohesive group. If there has ever been a time for us to take a more "scientific" approach to what we know works, this is it! Every day that we continue business as usual in our offices removing subluxations is another day lost to those who are trying to claim our science, art and philosophy. As our local organization fights for insurance equality, the chiropractic profession is being "sucker punched." With each sucker punch, our profession becomes weaker. Producing more chiropractors and attaining insurance equality will not increase our economic base. Graduates of chiropractic colleges will be unable to make a living because the insurance companies will direct patients to osteopaths or RDs (real doctors) for their

manipulations.

Let's face reality. We spend four years learning what medical doctors can study in four weekends and begin to implement in their practices Monday morning. The same chiropractic philosophy teacher taught me that the adjustment often works in spite of the doctor. Medical schools are offering alternative health electives that may soon become part of their core curriculum. Physical therapists recently lost their fight for the right to perform manipulations independently. We have not heard the last from them.

Fellow chiropractors, don't take it personally. The attack is not on us. The attack is an economic one. Alternative or complementary health care is a \$20 billion business today. All health care professionals, medical doctors included, are feeling the crunch of insurance "disimbursement." The government has issued over 16 million grants for alternative therapy centers across the country to develop the hard science behind these natural approaches. Once they establish the objective criteria for what we do, we will be considered unqualified to render this scientific medical treatment.

Some doctors among us have decided to join the medical establishment by forming MD/DC practices to obtain their own form of insurance equality. Simultaneously, many more chiropractors have considered the MD/DC practice, not excluding this writer, as our own source of medical justice. However, this type of practice only contributes to our slow demise, as multiple physiotherapies usually win over the fee for one adjustment.

It is the year 2000. I am headache free. Chiropractic celebrated its 100th birthday in 1995. It is up to us to ensure that chiropractic celebrates its 200th birthday. We can no longer rally behind the dynamic yet elusive subluxation complex that exists only in our college textbooks. What we know to be true about chiropractic does not help the profession, even when we do it from the heart. We need to prove it to the world.

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