

A Letter to Larry King

Michael Pedigo, DC

The chiropractic profession has been advocating "wellness" long before it became popular. To a large extent, the "wellness" movement can be credited to the media promoting it, but they fail to give the chiropractic profession due credit.

Jerry McAndrews, DC, recently sent a letter to Larry King on this issue. I found his letter very interesting and wanted to share it with you. With Dr. McAndrews' permission, I present his letter as follows.

January 11, 1998
Larry King
820 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. King:

I watched with great interest your interview with Dr. Andrew Weil the other evening. It strengthened my feelings that it is the media that is keeping the paradigm shift toward greater self-responsibility in health alive. The old days of going to the doctor and saying, "Here's my body. I got it sick, you get it well" are fading. The baby-boomer generation has given impetus to this changing attitude, but more frequently it is the baby-boomers in the media that have the power to do so.

My profession has for decades advanced the notion of "wellness" (don't smoke, eat right, exercise, etc.). It was largely ignored for two reasons:

1. There is little, if any, money to be made by the health professions in encouraging wellness concepts.

2. My profession did not have the necessary power to overcome the barrage of advertising promotion by the entrenched establishment in health care.

As concerns number one, it can be argued that pursuing wellness actually costs the health industry money. That is, if you keep yourself healthier, you don't need to run to the doctor as often, or for such serious health problems. It is only in recent times that large companies have learned that one dollar invested in wellness programs for their employees saves as much as \$3.70 in their employee benefits expenditures. But without the lead of the media, even this awareness would have had little effect.

Ironically, a few days before your interview of Dr. Weil on "Larry King Live," there was an article in the New York Times ("Journal Casts a Cold Eye on Alternative Medicine," Dec. 30, 1997), which I am enclosing a copy of for your review. You will note that among other things, the author comments: "Readers looking for the pros and cons of alternative therapies will find that the first issue comes down heavily on the con side, with detailed articles that skewer (emphasis added) homeopathy therapeutic touch and the popular self-help writer, Dr. Andrew Weil (emphasis added)."

I happen to know that in June, the Federation of Medical Licensing Boards (FMLB) adopted a new policy that requests that medical physicians who are cooperating in any way with alternative practitioners be reported to the licensing boards for investigation. This is a terrible state power that is being wielded to intimidate the growing numbers of medical physicians who are considering the benefits of "alternative therapies." Granted, the FMLB included a statement in its new policy that excluded professions that are state-licensed, as is my profession of chiropractic. Nevertheless, the chilling fallout from such a draconian policy/position will only serve to suffocate the emerging evaluations -- based on science/research, outcome measurements and patient satisfaction data -- of "alternative therapies."

I noted with special interest the obvious fact that Dr. Wallace Sampson, founder of the new journal *The Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine*, is not one of the younger generation (either baby-boomers or generation x-ers) who are the ones helping to open up dialogue into the "alternatives." There are now over 40 medical colleges who offer courses in "alternative medical therapies." What effect will the new FMLB policy have on these colleges? A stifling one at best, one I fear only the media will be able to overcome.

I want to applaud you for openly and forthrightly helping CNN viewers to judge the rationality and objectivity of spokespersons for "alternatives." As you found, Dr. Weil is a highly educated person who is, at the least, undeserving of "skewering." I also wanted to thank you for bringing up the issue of my own profession of chiropractic. I have spent over 40 years in it, have held the position of president of the Palmer College of Chiropractic, and currently am a national spokesperson for the American Chiropractic Association (ACA), and a member of the board of directors of the National Chiropractic Mutual Insurance Company (NCMIC), our large malpractice insurance carrier.

I wish you well in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

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