

Going Electronic: The Challenge

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

When the computer first entered the business world, the promise of the "paperless office" seemed on the horizon. But the actual effect of computers in this regard was something the programmers hadn't quite anticipated. Instead of reducing the amount of paper, computers began generating reams more.

The advent of the office computer hastened the speed and quality of printing technology. The printers attached to the computers began producing paper documents faster than ever before. As computers got faster, so did the printers. While some hurdles were overcome, disk space, back-up reliability, data transfer, and consumer trust were still an issue.

Recent developments have reduced, if not eliminated, many of those hurdles, with information transfer providing many strategic advances. The Internet has played a critical role in providing a paperless method of transferring almost anything.

Consider how we used to get an issue of Dynamic Chiropractic to you. In the old days (before 1994), most of the written material sent to editorial for consideration arrived via the post office or express mail services. The material, usually typed, but some handwritten, necessitated someone typing the article into our computer, transferring it to a floppy disk, taking it to our graphic arts department, printing it onto film, and then sending the negatives by express mail to the printer. Mechanicals (layouts of text and artwork) sent to us by our advertisers were also printed to film and expressed mailed to the printer.

Today, many of our articles and some of the advertising comes to us via e-mail.* This not only saves time and effort, but saves our advertisers significant unnecessary expenses (i.e., film mechanicals and express mail charges). We can download the advertising, layout the page, and e-mail it to our printer in the Midwest. These electronic advances make most everyone happy, except the express mailers.

Look at the front page of this issue. Instead of a mailing label, your name and address were e-mailed to our mailing house and downloaded onto their inkjet printer. If you had moved, the U.S. Postal Service would electronically send your new address to us.

"That's interesting, but what does that have to do with chiropractic," you might be thinking. The forces behind these advances are impacting your practice. Third-party payers are investing large sums of money in systems that will create master electronic patient files that providers will have access to better coordinate their care. Special software will help protect multiple physicians from prescribing deadly drug combinations. Payers will better understand what they are paying for and which form of care was best for the patient.

While seemingly imposing, master patient files will allow the number crunchers to compare the efficacy and expense of all forms of care. They will also be able to calculate (in very real terms) any related morbidity and/or mortality.

It will not be long before you will be managing patients and submitting bills via an intranet,

cyberspeak for private web sites of an organization that are only accessible to specific individuals.

You may be a veteran of the Internet, or an Internet rookie who is just now getting into the game; or maybe you're tired of all the hoopla and would be happy if you never heard "Internet" again as long as you live. But the Internet is a powerful medium of multimedia, and it is growing at breakneck speed. It is for that reason that Dynamic Chiropractic has made establishing a chiropractic presence on the Internet a top priority. This holds the usual challenges of any new medium, mixed with the desire to make it happen immediately.

If you've visited our web site (<http://www.chiroweb.com>) in the past few months, don't think you've seen it all. A "remodeling" process is just beginning. Despite three awards and continuous "traffic," we will not be satisfied until our web site achieves the level of quality and services indicative of Dynamic Chiropractic.

DC ChiroWeb will be developing chiropractic services not possible through a newsprint medium. These will be announced as they become available in the next few months.

Understanding a new medium is merely a matter of learning the vocabulary and receiving timely information. You will be receiving both in this publication. Michael Devitt, our resident Internet voyager, will be providing articles and information to help you become better acquainted with the Internet (See "Getting Started on the Internet: Whatis.com and Learn2.com" in this issue). Should you have any questions, you may contact Michael at DC: tele: (714) 960-6577; fax: (714) 536-1482; e-mail: Editorial@DCMedia.com.

- For specific information on how to send advertising mechanicals or articles via e-mail, please contact Advertising@DCMedia.com, or Editorial@DCMedia.com.

Donald M. Petersen Jr., BS, HCD (hc), FICC (h)
Editor/Publisher of Dynamic Chiropractic
E-mail: Don@DCMedia.com

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