

## Vitalism -- Chiropractic's Greatest Disappearing Act

I find it interesting that chiropractic was developed on vitalistic principles, and somewhere along the way that principle was replaced by musculoskeletal therapy. As a result of this shift the public largely views chiropractic as offering musculoskeletal pain therapy only. At a grass-roots level, chiropractors like myself have to work our butts off re-educating the public of the true potential of chiropractic.

-- J.F.C, NSW, Australia

Just when the rest of the world -- along with traditional medicine -- is running head over heels towards natural healing, chiropractic is pulling off one of the greatest disappearing acts of all time. According to the educational, scientific and public offerings, vitalism is to chiropractic as Bill Clinton is to smoking pot: neither admits to actually using the stuff. So how is vitalism disappearing from the profession who, by all rights, should pioneer in this area? The answer is deceptively simple. It is disappearing from every area of chiropractic, save perhaps from the hearts and souls of a decreasing number of disunited chiropractors.

### Present Status

There is no common agreement among the profession as to a definition of vitalism. There are those with strong opinions (F. Barge), but many offerings are laced with special interests.

### Scientific Literature

When was the last time you read meaningful and updated studies on vitalism in the scientific chiropractic journals or textbooks?

### Professional Casual Reading Literature

Look around. Have you seen any exciting or ongoing discussions/debates on vitalism among ourselves? Sure, an article or two pops up from time to time, but these are isolated and incongruent appearances.

### Chiropractic Colleges

Did your college have a course in vitalism (e.g., Vitalism 101)? Now, we are not talking about token courses. We are talking about courses which offer didactic course work on the developing public interest in natural healing, workshops in developing vitalistic skills, or technique courses which integrate vitalistic methods into chiropractic therapy. Admittedly, some of the older graduates were enriched with vitalism. However, one must focus on our newer graduates.

### Postgraduate Programs

Workshops in vitalism? Discussions on current vitalistic concepts? NIMBY (not in my back yard).

### Scientific Research

Vitalistic research? It appears that we have adopted an antivitalistic bias.

## Private Practice

Proponents of vitalism offer a wide array of vitalistic beliefs. This creates confusion among patients. Opponents of vitalism denounce it as not "scientific." Not only does this add to the confusion among our patients, the opponent's denunciation creates the air that our chiropractic brethren who incorporate vitalism into their practice are nothing more than witch-doctors.

"The power of thought, -- the magic of the mind!"

-- Lord Byron, *The Corsair*. Canto I; Stanza 8

With each article I encourage you to write the questions you may have, commentaries on patient care, or thoughts to share with your colleagues, to me in care of *Dynamic Chiropractic*. Please include your return address.

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