

Leadership: Aspects of a Needed Trait in the Chiropractic Profession

Oh sure, there are lots of little leaders running their corners of the profession and for them we are somewhat thankful. Unfortunately, their interests are often too specialized to suit the everyday needs of the field doctor. -- "Chiropractic Leadership: Good and Bad News," *DC*, 7/14/97.

Radio music stations, CD stores, and MTV play a popular song by Paula Cole called "Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?" In her doleful way, she laments the fading traditions between men in women, and pines for a John Wayne-type. Her song expresses the same sense of frustration we feel when a fundamental part of our day-to-day structure is missing. This loss is also felt by the members of a professional group (in this case chiropractors) when an important part of their structure is missing.

So what does this have to do with chiropractic? Perhaps the single most important quality of any profession is leadership. When leadership is strong, the profession thrives. Conversely, when leadership is weak (can you name the president of the ACA?), fragmented (medipractors, straights, mixers), or too specialized (Drs. Barge and Gold), the greater body of the profession withers and sails aimlessly into the future. Compare, for example, the contrasting leadership styles between John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter. Strong leaders take us places. Weak leaders weaken all of us.

Why then don't we have effective leadership? The answer may be in the wisdom of another popular rock-n-roll song, "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places." The tenor of some recent chiropractic online "e-mail" discussions express the fundamental issues underlying the leadership problems chiropractic faces today. Specifically, there is a cry for "more research," as though research will lead chiropractic out of its doldrums and into a shiny future.

Do these thoughts sound familiar?

"If the goal of chiropractic research is not to prove if chiropractic works or does not work, what is the point in doing it?"

"The most important research issue is how to educate the general population to use more chiropractic."

Admittedly, we need research if we are to survive, but the demand for research is not unique to chiropractic. All health care professions must do the same. If ever research is to provide meaningful leadership for the chiropractic profession, it cannot do so unless there is a strong, plentiful and viable body of leaders among chiropractic's academic institutions. Without a broad-based representation of academic leadership, research is as good as a Formula-1 race car with no engine.

Well, then, who provides this academic leadership? The deans of research in each of our colleges? The brainy professors? The "research faculty?"

Real academic leadership does not come from a selected group of men or women, nor from a few

privileged individuals, or gregarious technique evangelists. True leadership comes from a fountain of empowered faculty, unshackled from the money-squeezing and self-enriching tendencies of college higher-ups.

Customs and practices from local and college leaders that drown out the voices of the faculty and starve their talents is a sure pathway to a gloomy future. This is particularly true for the great numbers of field doctors whose very existence depends upon the faculty who taught them in the first place.

Quite some time ago I threw down a challenge to the deans, presidents and others in this profession to solve this problem. I call out this challenge anew. It is the duty of your leadership to meet this challenge. Empower the faculty. Assist them in becoming a successful group of hard-working, earnest and rewarded leaders in the chiropractic community. The entire profession awaits a response. Now more than ever, we need strong influences from our academic centers. Otherwise, colleges are nothing more than fancy racing cars with no engines.

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