

Redefining Our Leadership

Arnold Cianciulli, BS,DC,MS,FICC,FACC

The national chiropractic landscape is dotted by ACA and ICA. Lesser organizations that advocate the extremes (from non-diagnosis, correction of subluxation only, to drugs and minor surgery) are also quoted in the national media from time to time. This confused and contradictory picture easily lends credence to those who characterize the chiropractic profession as marginal. Without a strong single message, this marginality is confirmed and sociologists are vindicated.

What are we the practicing chiropractors to do? For too long we have allowed mindless egotistical leadership. These leaders must be replaced by a grass roots advocacy. The time has come for ACA and ICA members to publicly cross-examine candidates for office within their organizations. We must examine the candidates' thinking and determine whether the candidate represents true change or is merely a member of the status quo club.

The new chiropractic politicians must espouse the politics of ideas, solutions, and real world success. The days of "foot in the door" solutions must be rejected. Since 1973, the "foot in the door" politics have resulted in a medicare definition of chiropractic which is demeaning to our noble profession and which has reduced the chiropractic practitioner to an A-2000 provider. The "foot in the door" politics have allowed for a second or maybe even third-class picture of chiropractic in the United States Congress. How can we be expected to gain equity with MDs and DOs when our presentation is one of a low-level spinal technician?

It is my belief that this image, which has resulted from poor political leadership, will eventually allow other providers to take over the spinal care field. Slowly, but consistently, the physical therapists, the rehabilitation technicians, etc., are invading and capturing the spinal care arena. Thanks to our mindless leadership, we are running as fast backwards as other groups are propelling themselves forward.

My plan for dealing with this mess which affects the Congress, state governments, the insurance industry, managed care industry and the other bureaucracies:

1. A national council composed of new thinkers representing ACA, ICA, CCE, FCER, NCMIC and COSCA be formed. This "supreme council" will format an integrated multifaceted presentation of the chiropractic profession which will be used to change our technician role to one of a cognitive health care professional whose dedication to the patient's welfare is first and foremost. Instead of a piecemeal, self-serving, turf-oriented, segmented profession, we will become a seamless integrated health system which espouses ethical and competent patient care.
2. This supreme council will be funded by their respective organizations and their decisions will be binding on all our public pronouncements. No longer will the education community and the research community be isolated from the political realities which face the chiropractic profession. This is long overdue.

3. Our colleges must train holistic chiropractic physicians who champion natural care, not drug care and not just subluxation care. Our visions for our future DCs must be as broad as nature, but our practices must be as evidence-based as can be achieved. There needs to be a resurgence for the study of the health care philosophy of chiropractic in all our schools. Obviously, our philosophy will not be merely mechanistic or purely vitalistic, but must be science-based and realistically empirical in those areas where science is presently deficient.
4. The research community must take direction and be vigorously supported by the chiropractic community. Their studies must help shape our future services to the public. However, their research must represent the needs of the practicing DC and not the interests of curious intellectuals hiding behind ivory covered walls.
5. The Congress of Chiropractic State Associations must participate in this supreme council and bring to the table all vital news concerning the happenings in all our 50 states. No longer should a single state organization face legislative opposition without the help and support of the other 49 states. It is time for the motto "one for all and all for one" to become our national working motto. In this age of the information highway, combining our resources must be utilized whenever our opponents surface.

Arnold Cianciulli, BS, DC, MS
Bayonne, New Jersey

JULY 1995