

It's Not Too Late

John Hofmann, DC, FICA

This article is written to those of you who belong to nothing, do nothing, support nothing, but continue to gripe and whine about everything. Go ahead, look in the mirror, is this you?

Chiropractic inclusion in national health care is probably going to become reality sometime this year. Is it going to embarrass the entire population? Is it going to allow all your current patients to continue to use your services? Is it going to open the doors to the rest of the nation who have never utilized our unique services? It's up to all of you who have never participated in the profession's future before. Yes, you!

Of course everyone will blame any failures on the ICA or the ACA or SCASA; on those "leaders" who continually fight with each other or have different philosophies or who practice differently. Yes, you will. It is so easy to place blame on "those people," "them," "they," that you never look in the mirror and say to yourself: "Maybe I should do something about this," or "Gee, maybe those men and women need some help."

About 50 percent of our profession do not belong or support any national organization. This is criminal, dumb, and selfish. Yes, criminal. How about all the people who will never have the chance to experience long and healthful lives because 25,000 doctors of chiropractic, who know its benefits, refuse to stand up and be counted. I call that criminal. There is nothing standing in your way except yourselves and your apathy. Sometimes the truth hurts.

After 21 years in chiropractic I am truly ashamed of half of my profession for their failure to come to the aid of the very thing that gives them joy, fulfillment, and finances; their reason for being. I know that some of you think that this is an old-fashioned ideal: loving the thing that makes us different and great. I value highly this "thing of ours." I love the fact that my family is a chiropractic family, that my wife Sandy understands what I do and supports it, that my daughter Wende is a doctor of chiropractic and my son John wants to be one too. I have a nephew and a niece in chiropractic colleges. My wife's two cousins are chiropractors, and over 80 others have become chiropractors because of my involvement in chiropractic. If you think that I'm going to quit fighting now you're gravely mistaken. And it's not too late for you my friend. But you must act now.

I know, you don't like the ICA, ACA, SCASA or any other group, but they're all working for our inclusion in the national health care scene. I belong to the ICA and the Michigan Chiropractic Council. I support FACTS, Life Around the World, and give to both Logan (1968 graduate) and Life College and Life West. I even like some ACA people, more than I like to admit. I really admire those who give of themselves to our profession, no matter what group they belong to. Over the years, I have even begun to respect my enemies because they have always turned out to be hard workers, darn it! But how about you? Are your petty grievances so strong that you cannot see the forest for the trees? Forgive whoever you don't like in the national groups and forgive yourself. Stop looking for the negative, or looking where these dedicated men and women have stumbled. Start seeing the hard work and the good they have accomplished, and maybe start becoming involved so you can change that which you don't like.

Do not let those few who always have negative things to say be your guides. Lead by example, show your friends that you are capable of greater things than just sitting on the sidelines wondering just what those idiots in the ICA or ACA are doing. Get off your sacrum and tell them how to do it! You have to belong, however. No one that I know listens to people who gripe but don't belong.

To continue as a profession we must realize that our greatest strength is our uniqueness, the fact that we are different from the MDs and DOs. Our approach to health is not the same. Over the years as we have grown, we have attracted many in our midst who have joined because it "looked better" than dentistry, etc. These people would have us change "that which we are," to what they would "like to be," but don't have the "courage to become." Those of you who are in this group need to belong and support us. Without us you are nothing. Act now.

Many of us have given countless hours to our profession and the cost has been high. Dr. Stan Heard of Arkansas was responsible for getting access to the White House and President Clinton to provide the first document on chiropractic to the administration. Stan and Attorney Steve Dickson (who represented the Missouri and Kansas chiropractic associations), died in a plane crash coming home from a meeting in Washington. Stan's wife Penny is continuing to carry out the Heard commitment to chiropractic even after her personal loss. Where are you?

The cost to you to support the profession is minimal -- a few adjustments a month. Failure to do this will be maximal, the loss of the largest drugless profession in the world. Current and potential patients need the freedom of access to chiropractic without restraint, without MD gatekeepers to bar the way, without restrictive co-pay or deductibles. All of this takes money, contact with your senators and representatives. This isn't a republican or democratic thing, it is a chiropractic thing. Remember, no bucks, no Buck Rogers.

We have a great opportunity to make ourselves heard this year. It may never be this important again. Chiropractic can attain its rightful place among the other health professions and change the course of millions of people's lives from sick and suffering to health and happiness. It's not platform talk, it's true. Get mad at the laziness and apathy of your fellow DCs. Encourage them to join the ICA or whatever. Do it yourself first. Seize the day, make a commitment, take action for yourself and our profession!

Those of us who work toward the inclusion of chiropractic will continue to work with or without you. But the viability of chiropractic hangs in the balance. What will it take to make you and others like you to finally commit? Will it take the slow erosion of your patient base, or the loss of your ability to earn an income before you act? This is not meant to be a scare tactic, but rather a wake-up call. Don't press the snooze button and go back to sleep. It is not too late to start.

Teddy Roosevelt said, "For better it is to win glorious triumphs though checkered with failure than to take rank with those poor souls who neither enjoy much nor suffer much because they live in that gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat."

John A. Hofmann, DC, FICA
Allen Park, Michigan

JANUARY 1994