

"20/20" -- The National Enquirer of the Tube

Chester Wilk, DC

I have been receiving a barrage of emotional and angry calls and letters from chiropractors around the country over the recent unfair characterization of chiropractic on the "20/20" show. Let's look at the facts in a cool and unemotional manner, what we can do in response, and how to prevent a reoccurrence.

First of all, television programs live by ratings. If the ratings are high, the money is good. A sensational program on the air which gets everybody talking means the ratings and advertising dollars will climb. The station clearly has no alliance with medicine, the drug houses, or anyone else. Their alliance is with making money. The show clearly demonstrated that it has no interest in performing any kind of public service or conducting itself objectively. It refused to allow either of the ACA or ICA an opportunity to respond to the chiropractors used in their reporting. Instead, "20/20" used relatively obscure practitioners of no significant standing in their profession. If they want to see chiropractors working on children, they should have interviewed Dr. Lorraine Golden at Kentuckiana Children's Center in Louisville, Kentucky. She is viewed by her local townfolks as the Mother Teresa of the chiropractic profession, providing free care to the needy. Of course, "20/20" declined guidance from these sources.

I wish I had three minutes on that program. I would have blown it and its ratings in the gutter where it belongs. Obviously the program did not want honest balance or objectivity: it's less sensational and less lucrative to the program. Please understand that I am not opposed to well balanced and honest investigative reporting: that's a constructive force which demands that different groups of people be better in all respects. In the case of chiropractors, it requires that they communicate more appropriately, and it demonstrates to chiropractors the necessity to demand strong internal ethics, quality of care, and standard of care guidelines. We can all agree that this is good.

But who did "20/20" use? The chief spokesman that the "20/20" show used to bash chiropractic was Dr. Murray Simon Katz. He appeared as a witness before the New Zealand government commission on chiropractic which traveled to the United States, Canada, and Britain. Dr. Katz represented himself as a "consultant" to the Manitoba Health Services Commission in 1973. The executive director of the Manitoba Health Services Commission, Dr. D.H. Crofford, categorically denied that Dr. Katz had ever been appointed or had ever served as a consultant to the Manitoba government or Health Service Commission. Dr. Katz misrepresented himself to the New Zealand Commission of Inquiry by writing the letter himself. The New Zealand Commission took three days of depositions of him under oath and compiled a summary of this so-called "expert." Had "20/20" been open to our national associations' input, their program would have been forewarned as to their chosen medical expert. Rather than editorializing, I will quote passages from the New Zealand Commission's report. They will speak for themselves.

Dr. Murray S. Katz, "adopted a series of dishonest stratagems ... his conduct was plainly fraudulent ... At a time when he adopted this policy of lies and fraud, which was deliberate and calculated, he was a registered medical practitioner ... the medical authorities in Canada had never taken any disciplinary action against him. It is not for

the Commission to say whether disciplinary action is or is not appropriate in such a case, but ... it is disappointing to find that a practicing medical practitioner could think it right to indulge in a deliberate course of lies and deceit of that kind. Dr. Katz told us these matters without appearance of shame ... We think the kindest thing to say is that Dr. Katz has become so emotionally involved in his self-appointed role as a 'concerned advocate of consumer rights' that over a period of years he has allowed his enthusiasm to override his judgment, his sense of reality, and his sense of what is proper ... we are satisfied that he found it difficult to distinguish between the role of expert witness and that of an advocate. In cross examination, he tended to be evasive."

As I see it, "20/20," by using the National Enquirer type tactics in bashing the entire profession, does a disservice to the public. Showing a picture of a youngster crawling on his belly and the inference that somehow the chiropractic profession poses such a threat is plainly obscene. If "20/20" wants to see what a real children's center does, then go to Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Lorraine Golden, back in 1955, obtained an inactive military hospital and turned it into a place of mercy providing free care to thousands of needy children. I personally think of her as a Sister Kenny, Florence Nightingale, and Marie Curie all rolled into one. If you want to tug on the heart strings of the public and provide a real service to the viewers, this is the kind of material that would prove to be much more positive and constructive. I might add that the American College of Surgeons requested that their settlement money of \$200,000 in our lawsuit against them in the AMA et al., lawsuit be given to Kentuckiana Children's Center. This information would have been available to them if they reached out to our leaders instead of shutting them out while attacking us with people I have never heard of before. Everybody in chiropractic has heard of Kentuckiana.

Perhaps what we need is an investigation of the "investigators" for their disservice and lack of honesty and objectivity by ignoring a major children's center and emphasizing a less significant one: all for the cause of sensationalism and its economic rewards.

Shortly after I filed my successful antitrust lawsuit against the American Medical Association, I had an investigative news team come to my office unannounced. They spent over an hour there and took 45 minutes of videotape. I was not in the office, but the doctor who was became very enthusiastic about the questions they asked and the answers that he gave them. He anxiously awaited to see it aired. He believed that it would make a great interview. The show finally aired one month later, but none of his interview was used. Imagine that, spending over an hour in the office and shooting 45 minutes of tape and not using any. What the reporters did was to go from office to office until they finally got what they were looking for: not a show interested in honest facts, but a sensational show. They waited until they got some inappropriate answers from chiropractors, not to get a story but to create a story.

You may have heard the commercial that says people judge us by the words we use. How true. It is a lesson that some chiropractors still need to learn. For example, it is very important to use "may" when describing chiropractic's ability to help patients with ailments. No doctors should use absolute statements concerning patient results regardless if they have nearly 100 percent positive results with certain ailments. It takes nothing away from chiropractic to use the word "may," yet some chiropractors naively make absolute statements. As to the scope of ailments that fall within the realm of chiropractic health care, it should be noted that chiropractic does NOT treat ailments per se. What chiropractors actually do is treat the patient for the ailment. This is not splitting hairs, but more accurately defines what we do. Chiropractors need to explain that chiropractic is limited to patients' own ability to heal themselves with the chiropractor simply applying the appropriate treatment to assist the body to heal itself, and that the results can vary from patient to patient, from ailment to ailment, and from time to time. Since this approach is unique, it is often misunderstood and appropriate clarification by chiropractors is often overlooked, if not enhanced. This creates grist for the propaganda mills and the National Enquirer type of programs.

I strongly urge that every chiropractor who reads this article copy it, together with a cover letter, and send it to every radio, television, and newspaper in their town. Let them see what kind of shoddy tactics are employed by "20/20." Failure to do this will encourage them to do it again. Its loyalty is toward getting higher ratings and the financial reward that accompanies it. They need to be exposed. Perhaps they will be motivated to give more responsible, honest, and objective reporting. I am available to speak via telephone on your local station. They can patch me right into their station. Let's show "20/20" that we will not sit still for such tactics. Call me at (312) 725-4878.

Chester Wilk, DC
Chicago, Illinois

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