

A Happy New Year?

Editorial Staff

Just a quick look back -- before we move on.

You may not realize it, but a new era has begun. Last year we saw the end of one phase and the beginning of the next.

1992 saw the final chapter in the 14 year-old Wilk et al. lawsuit. Chiropractic finally won and medicine finally lost. But did we win more than just one battle?

Another lawsuit was settled last year, the suit against the Dupage County Hospital. The world, particularly medicine, is well aware that we will take whatever steps necessary to gain equal treatment. As the Wisconsin Hospital Association stated in the preface of their publication *Chiropractors in Hospitals*: "Chiropractors have also pursued the elimination of barriers to practice through the courts."

This, in a way, signaled the end of chiropractic's "litigious phase." We have proven ourselves equal to the fight in the courts. The next phase has begun.

Looking through the pages of "DC" the past year, two issues surface again and again: research and legislation

The issues of practice guidelines and health care reform overshadow almost all other events. These are the concerns of the nation. They must be our concern. They are the next phase.

Fortunately, medicine has to fight the battles of research, guidelines and legislation just like we do. Unfortunately, they have money, government funding and political influence we don't. The only asset we have to balance this inequity is our patients.

The media which regularly besmirched our reputation, has been producing more balanced reports on chiropractic: some have even been positive. This does not mean they will not present the actions of a few DCs who are involved in unethical or unacceptable conduct.

It is now not a question of the efficacy of chiropractic care, but the integrity and ethics of chiropractors themselves. These concerns have given birth to the demand for clinical practice guidelines; the public wants to know what it should be getting.

By now it should be obvious to all that the challenges of practice guidelines are here to stay. They are woven into the political fabric of considerations now being voiced as solutions to the health care problems of humanity.

President-elect Bill Clinton's famous "100 days" will begin on the 20th of this month. While there may be some doubts as to just how fast a national health care program could be instituted, we should realize that once the plan is formulated, it will be next to impossible to change it.

We have moved from one arena to the next. Like General George Patton's Third Army, we have

moved from one battle only to join another on a different front. In essence, we have moved from court rooms to capitol buildings. The enemy are still those who would restrict chiropractic care. The patient is the ultimate beneficiary of our efforts.

If you are feeling like you are being asked to do more than ever before, it's because you are. We are still fighting for our survival, only now the stakes are much higher.

Our chiropractic heritage is privileged to have had men and women who sacrificed for patient and profession. Our commitment is our strength.

Yes, you can do plenty. Public opinion will ultimately win this war.

Communicate with your patients. Show them a copy of the Mercy Guidelines and discuss the effort of the chiropractic profession to insure the highest care and value to the patient.

Call up those MDs you have referred patients to, whether or not they refer to you. Show them your guidelines and ask what they have.

Share with those MDs two of the most important chiropractic research studies available: the Utah Study and the Ebrall Study. These will demonstrate for all to see just how much more cost effective chiropractic care really is when compared to medicine.

If you don't have reprints, you can order reprints of both studies for only \$7 U.S. per set (please see the form below). This will give you two of the most powerful weapons in the chiropractic research arsenal.

Your national and state legislative representatives need to see this information. Your local media needs to have it. Your patients should read about it in the waiting room. The more allies we have, the better our chances of winning.

Full inclusion in national health care is a victory that could establish chiropractic as a health care alternative equal to if not superior to medicine. Exclusion or limited access could contain and ultimately eliminate our profession in a way that the AMA never could.

The war is NOT over!

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