

The Orthopractic Miracle

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Chiropractors are very driven by the spirit of innovation. Each year brings a crop of new techniques and protocols. The down side of this continual innovation is the yearly blooming of cults and splinter groups.

The proliferation of technique salesmen, management gimmicks, and nutritional fads is widespread. Yet because the average chiropractor is essentially logical and ethical, most of these techniques and their respective gurus sink under the weight of dwindling professional support. And in the end, only those movements which prove their worth remain in the chiropractic fold.

It is in this light that orthopractic will cause a short-term wave of publicity, but because of its irrational nature, will eventually self-destruct. It will destroy itself because it serves no social need, will rally no flood of patient support, and is inherently illogical.

The orthopractic principles imply that manual therapy or adjusting procedures should be monitored by a medical physician because, as they have stated, the potential for misdiagnosis and abuse is widespread. Orthopractors deride the treatment of children and convulse over using terms like "subluxation."

They fail to realize that chiropractors at home and abroad will never willingly practice by prescription only. They underestimate the power of natural healing, quibble about semantics, and fail to realize most kids and adults are treated appropriately. Although they may mean well, their principles are out of step with the manual therapy world.

Osteopaths who practice manipulation have the blessing of the medical community, yet they embrace the treatment of children, practice independently and refer to joint dysfunction as "lesions." Their basic practice parameters are incompatible with orthopractic.

Massage therapists, being one of the fastest growing independent providers of soft tissue therapy and joint mobilization have no interest in being under the wing of the medical or orthopractic establishment.

And physical therapists, against much political pressure from the AMA, are trying to break free of the physician-as-God model. They are developing portal of entry rights in most states with PhD programs, allowing them to be called doctor. Their recent drive has been to be freer rather than more confined by the physician gatekeeper.

Another principle of orthopractic, which will be incompatible with survival, is their firm belief that only the musculoskeletal system should be treated. Chiropractors, as the nation's largest natural health care organization, will be unwilling to avoid scientifically acceptable natural therapies, nutritional counseling, herbal remedies, and other rational health care practices.

Chiropractors understand the healing power of nature. They see their patients as whole people who cannot be divided into a bag of bones and chemicals. Unlike medical doctors they realize that prevention is the best cure of all. Convincing chiropractors to abandon their respect for the innate

wisdom of the body will be doomed to failure. Even medical doctors are beginning to drop their unscientific war against many forms of natural medicine.

It is not uncommon for medical doctors to prescribe nutritional remedies for such diverse problems as the common cold, stress, osteoporosis, general debility, pregnancy, anemia, etc. Meditation is now medically accepted and the use of over-the-counter herbal medications is the fastest growing segment of commercial home remedies. It is in this light that orthopractic practitioners will soon be an anachronism because they fail to recognize the scientific basis of natural therapeutics.

The primary benefit to be gleaned from the orthopractic movement will be to recognize that this is a small splinter group within the chiropractic profession. We must avoid dissipating energy trying to contain or disturb the progress of these vocal minorities. It will be far more efficient to allow them to sink under the baggage of their illogical assumptions. By taking a scientific attitude toward manipulation and natural healing, we will destroy these minorities by principle rather than politics.

In summary, the beauty of the orthopractic movement is that it allows the vast majority of chiropractors to experience the middle ground. This chiropractic silent majority sees the orthopractors as they really are, a vocal, disaffected cult outside the mainstream. The medically oriented chiropractor and the rabid straights are both headline grabbers who do not reflect the views of the average doctor.

Should you desire your silent voice to be heard, you might consider some possible avenues for expression:

1. Follow every negative media event with a well researched, scientific article from a chiropractic or lay publication. Angry letters to the editor have now become a chiropractic cliché.
2. Give money and time to chiropractic colleges and research organizations. Unless the profession has the financial backing to continue to scientifically prove or disprove its premises, its growth will be hampered.
3. Confront fellow doctors who are acting unethically. Tell them why you disagree with their errant behavior and let your views be known publicly.
4. Report any fraudulent activity to the state board or local district attorney. Even a few criminal chiropractors make it hard for the rest of us.

As we approach the 21st century, our society is demanding the scientific validation of health care practices. Claiming to cure muscular dystrophy and predicting criminal behavior from x-rays is an affront to the trust of the American public. Pamphlets claiming cancer cures, unethical management techniques and grandiose technique claims are fodder for sweeping media exposes.

In summary, we must continue to improve our colleges, use science to study our best and worst, and kick out the bad apples. As long as we work hard and keep our noses clean there will only be one orthopractic miracle: It will be a miracle if they survive.

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