

## CO-OP Advertising -- a Trap for New Doctors

Carl R. Regenhardt

You'll often hear doctors say: If all doctors in their city would cease individual promotion, they could pool all those funds and present a massive, unified advertising campaign to the public.

True, they could.

They continue: If all chiropractors pooled their advertising budgets, the impact on the community would be far greater.

True, it would.

Then they reason: Given this increased impact, and if the advertisements were carefully produced and tailored to the target audience, chiropractic's image and awareness would improve faster. Far faster than it could through individuals doing their own promotion.

Again true, it would.

Using these facts, the supporters of this idea draw this conclusion: All participating chiropractors will benefit.

False.

The idea appears valid on the surface, but after a little thought you'll realize the greatest and perhaps only benefactors will be the well-established doctors in the community. The doctors who have been in the city for a long time and acquired name recognition, have a great deal to gain under this program. But, for new doctors, the ones the public does not know, co-op advertising is the kiss of death. It will mean the disbursement of their advertising budget without any return, a financial drain which could spell bankruptcy.

This is not to infer that co-op advertising does not have its place. Just the opposite. I'm a strong proponent of co-op -- limited co-op. If two, three, four or even five doctors who are geographically separated wish to advertise together to cut costs, I strongly encourage their actions. It is when all doctors in one geographic area ban together that I object on behalf of the new doctors.

The job of promoting chiropractic generically is the province of state associations. This argument is countered with: "My state association doesn't have the funds," or "My state association is too weak," or "My state association is fighting among themselves." That's not true everywhere. You need only to look at the great efforts being made by the California and Florida associations. They're working to effectively promote chiropractic as a joint effort. That's where co-op advertising should be generated and all doctors should support it. But locally generated co-op advertising can be a trap for the new doctor. Locally, he must promote himself.

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