

Presidents' Forum

CHIROPRACTIC'S BIGGEST THREAT -- EGO

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In 1895, the year chiropractic was born, Grover Cleveland was president; Leo XIII was pope, and there were 45 states in the union. Senators were not yet elected by the public, women had not achieved the right to vote, and federal income tax was still almost 20 years away. There were three suspension bridges in the country. The Wright brothers had not yet taken off at Kitty Hawk, and Babe Ruth was born.

Chiropractic was founded at a time when communications were limited and untimely. The United States had not yet emerged as a world power. When D.D. Palmer introduced chiropractic, the American Medical Association was not quite 40 years old.

The 20th century has been an enigmatic phase of social evolution. technological advances made the world "smaller," more accessible and convenient. Yet despite these advances, mankind has been able to establish political systems and beliefs which have provided formidable barriers to community, more prominent than any ever provided by nature. The political barriers which have separated countries and cultures and seemed so ominous, are now crumbling. Mankind is on the verge of viewing problems not in a parochial, self-centered manner, but in global terms. Environmental, health, and financial issues no longer threaten one country, but the entire world.

When world attention is focused upon issues which threaten entire societies, the fate of one profession matters little. Despite the contributions or necessity of a profession, if its performance does not address the immediate concerns of the public it serves, a profession becomes expendable.

Allopaths have made significant progress during this century in establishing and projecting themselves as first-rate healing arts professionals. Medical doctors have created technological marvels in diagnostic and treatment modalities and their efforts have been captured for posterity by the likes of Ben Casey, Dr. Kildare, and Marcus Welby. Yet their place in society has begun to erode. Health care costs have skyrocketed without an appreciable increase in patient satisfaction or clinical results. The major crisis confronting society today is affordable, effective health care.

Chiropractic, the most conspicuous, alternative to allopathic care, has spent the better part of its first century fighting for survival. This goal having been achieved through the legislative and legal process, chiropractic stands waiting in the wings to take its appropriate place in the health care delivery system. The question is, will it ever get the chance?

Since its inception, chiropractic has been forced to function outside mainstream society. As any chiropractor can tell you, the reason for this circumstance is the unlawful practices of the AMA. The truth contained in the preceding sentence may have been the reason for chiropractic's position in society a few years ago, but no more. The biggest threat to chiropractic today is not the AMA, but ego.

Society is being courted by two suitors. Chiropractic offers reasonable, affordable answers to some health care needs. Allopathy also offers some reasonable answers. Neither profession holds all the

answers and neither is unflawed. Unfortunately, not only does the allopathic trade association (AMA) have larger numbers and more financial strength, it also has the luxury of unity. In chiropractic it seems that every effort advanced by the profession is countered by a similar effort by another group within the profession. Individuals who profess unity and action for the benefit of the profession, then foment unrest and undermine progress, serve themselves, not chiropractic. Groups which believe their interpretation of chiropractic principles and practice are the only foundations for legislation and policy, satisfy their own needs for ego gratification, not the needs of a growing profession. As an academic exercise, the debate of different points of view can be informative and productive. When such an exercise is conducted in a public forum, the confusion which results could be disastrous.

How long can society afford to wait for the chiropractic profession to heal the rift which is tearing it apart? How can society form an opinion on chiropractic when it is ignorant of its principles and practice? How can society objectively assess the profession when it is confused by multiple national and state organizations, all allegedly representing the profession?

Since 1985, there have been eighteen more presidents, eight more popes, and five states added to the union. Senators are elected by popular vote, women vote, and each year we are privileged to pay income tax. There are now 33 suspension bridges in the country, as well as numerous skyscrapers and architectural masterpieces. The Wright brothers conquered gravity at Kitty Hawk; Charles Lindbergh made the first solo transatlantic flight; jets became part of everyday life; and Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs in his career, and Hank Aaron surpassed him with 755.

Nothing has remained the same in society since 1895. Standards have been established, then surpassed to satisfy the needs of an ever demanding society. If chiropractic is to address the health care needs of the public, it must cure itself of the condition which has plagued its existence from the beginning. Chiropractic is as limited as the imagination and energy of chiropractors. Chiropractors are as limited as their egos.

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