

Wall Street Journal Rips Chiropractic

ARTICLE'S RELEASE SEEMS HARDLY COINCIDENTAL

Steve Kelly, managing editor

On Thursday, May 18, 1993, the lead story in the most widely-read paper in the U.S. blasted chiropractors for trying to make in-roads into the pediatric and basic health care realm.

Labelling chiropractic "a 19th century philosophy wearing the white smock of a science," staff reporter Timothy Smith's balefully titled article, "Chiropractors Seeking to Expand Practices Take Aim at Children," selected horror stories of children damaged and neglected under chiropractic care, condemned chiropractic for claiming manipulation cures "legions of childhood afflictions," and berated chiropractors for not supporting immunization.

That the article appeared in the Wall Street Journal is no surprise: that's in keeping with the paper's pro-AMA posture. And with the plethora of recent article in various national publications of the growing concern of fewer MDs opting to go into family practice, the AMA couldn't have scripted a better article to attack chiropractic's intrusion of their primary care domain.

Nor is it surprising, or coincidental that this article would appear just when the nation's attention is focused on the Health Care Task Force headed by Hillary Clinton, with chiropractic fighting with everything it has to assure its place in any health care reform.

In short, a sneak attack was launched and the chiropractic fleet was damaged in a hard-hitting raid.

But the counterattack has begun. The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) bought a full-page ad in the March 22, 1993 Wall Street Journal (page A11). In an open letter to Journal readers, the ACA expressed its dismay that the article "unfortunately focused on a very isolated number of sensational and tragic occurrences." The Journal article relates the instance of a chiropractor who treated a five-year-old boy and his four-year-old sister for middle ear infections with manipulation, and never made a medical referral. The infection in the boy became so advanced that it "invaded his skull"; the girl's infection led to deafness in one ear.

The ACA's response was calm, restrained, and logical. Instead of a knee-jerk, belligerent, scathing retort that most individual chiropractors would have made (and with good cause), the association clearly stated the realities of the modern DC: that DCs are trained to diagnose and are "obligated -- morally and professionally -- to refer all patients to medical doctors and other specialists when treatment is outside of their scope of practice"; that spinal manipulation is not a substitute for bacterial infections or routine vaccinations, as the article implied.

The basis of the rest of the article is that chiropractors are moving into the pediatric market in a big way, and that the children of America are in danger. The article states that "Reports of injury to children under chiropractic care are surfacing in the medical literature," and cites a case from a paper in the February 1992 Journal of Pediatrics of a four-month-old paralyzed from the neck down after a chiropractor's manipulation that apparently ruptured a large spinal cord tumor. What reporter Timothy Smith doesn't mention is that the Journal of Pediatric's paper stated this was the

ONLY such case involving a tumor of this type that's ever been reported in the medical literature. The Wall Street Journal article never reveals the extreme rarity of such an event, nor does it give its readers a balanced perspective by reporting the much more common complications of allopathic medicine.¹

The ACA response doesn't tackle this angle, but asserts the right of patients to select the health care provider of their choice, with the concomitant truism that "all disciplines understand that no single healing art has all the answers to the many health problems affecting mankind. Today, conscientious health practitioners work as a team for the benefit of the patient."

Though you may be still seething over the article, upon reflection you may see the wisdom in the ACA's approach. Let that example guide you in your letters to the Wall Street Journal. Keep your poise and your dignity, but most assuredly let Timothy Smith know he has a warped, and biased view of chiropractic that he's proliferating.

Stephen Kelly
Assistant Editor

Reference:

1. Schimmel, E: The hazard of hospitalization. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Jan. 1964; 100-110 (Yale-New Haven study of iatrogenic reactions shows allopathic medicine responsible for premature deaths of 3,000 American per week, 1,000 from unnecessary surgery, and 2,000 from reactions to prescription drugs.

Wall Street Journal
Editorial
200 Liberty St.
New York, N.Y. 10281
(212) 416-2000

APRIL 1993