

Is Sex Necessary to Sell Chiropractic?

Elaine Carter, chiropractic student

The other day I chanced to see a publication which calls itself the "Magazine of the Chiropractic Profession." That sounded like something I should definitely be interested in, being a student more than half way through school. It had a nice glossy, colorful cover, but it struck me as being very odd that the picture on the front cover was of a woman sitting on a beach, topless (albeit with her back to the camera). I searched the copy for a connection to chiropractic. "Hmmm, I can't find one." It would make a great cover for a publication selling tropical cruises or alcohol. Sex has always been used to sell those products.

I forged ahead and paged through the magazine. One of the first full-page ads was of a woman lying prone on a table, one breast exposed, as the doctor applied the advertised product to her back. I had just learned proper draping procedures in PT class; this was certainly an example of improper draping. Hmmm, is sex necessary to sell this product too?

As I proceeded through the publication, just looking at the pictures, my eye fell on a product ad showing before and after pictures of a woman in high-cut lace panties. I wondered, "Is this ad for people who want to look like the model, or for people who want to look at the model?"

This same issue has an article about a "technique" complete with photos depicting the doctor doing an ischial move on a supine woman. Lay people refer to this as a "crotch grab." The technique classes I am taking stress that professionals never do anything that would put the patient in an embarrassing situation.

At the back of the issue, to complete this amazing adventure in journalism, were two pages on "Chiropractic News Nationwide" printed on bright yellow paper. The entire section consists of six news items reciting litigations against doctors across the country; four of the six involve sexual misconduct. The publication has even highlighted the more lurid accusations in each case by underlined them in black. The magazine has obviously gone to some lengths to uncover these salacious news items.

It would be one thing if only DCs saw this publication (and I would bet that a majority of chiropractors would feel embarrassed by it), but that's not the way it is.

Dr. Chester Wilk spoke at our school and informed us that "we" are not the only readers of chiropractic publications. He told us that the defense in his fight against the AMA regularly referred to chiropractic publications when citing examples of unethical and questionable procedures.

John Renner, MD, president of the Consumer Health Information Research Institute, whose self-appointed goal is to identify quackery, also spoke at our school and told us that he reads all our journals. He attempts to discredit the chiropractic profession at any given opportunity. "Chiropractic News Nationwide" is prepackaged mud ready for any anti-chiropractic agency to sling at any and all practicing chiropractors (guilt by association).

This is not a sexist issue; it is an ethical, moral issue. Stop and look at these publications and ask

yourself, "If I knew nothing at all about the benefit of chiropractic and chanced to see these sorts of pictures and articles, and the way it portrays chiropractors, would I want to send my wife, daughter or friend to one?"

What has to happen before those that find this kind of advertising objectionable speak up? How big a crisis need occur? At this point in history, more than any other, the credibility of chiropractic is being scrutinized on a national level, as health care reform takes shape in Washington.

What has to happen before those who are in business to serve this market via publications, products, and services cease to use poor judgment in what they put in print? I don't think sex is needed to sell chiropractic. What do you think?

Mr. Russell Gibbons, editor of Chiropractic History, is chairing a committee as part of the Chiropractic Research Editors' Council to set policy for advertising (see January 1993, JMPT). He might like to hear from you. As for me, I will be graduating in 1994 and don't want to ever feel I need to apologize to a patient for some ad slick on my desk.

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