

Round 14 of a 15-Round Fight -- We Need a Knockout Punch

Chester Wilk, DC

We can equate chiropractic to a 15-round world championship heavyweight fight. We are in the 14th round and based on the accumulated points of each round, we are trailing. We won the last round and have the momentum, but in order to win the fight we must deliver a knockout punch to our opponent. How we perform in these final two rounds will determine the outcome, and our future career in the ring. Let's look at the parallels.

No fighter has ever won a world championship crown without first believing that he could do it. In fact, no athlete or anyone else has ever been victorious without first believing in themselves. I wonder how many chiropractors have resigned themselves to playing "second fiddle" in the health care field because they have led themselves to believe "that's the way it's always been and that's the way it'll always be." This kind of "stinkin' thinkin'" must be brought to an abrupt halt. It is wrong and destructive to our health care, our citizens and our nation.

Every book of wisdom, including the Bible, insists that whatever you truly believe you will achieve. It brings to mind Ben Franklin's humorous parody of biblical verse: "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed." There were some who thought we'd never win the last round, but how wrong they were. We have everything going for us to win the fight in the last two rounds unless we choose to self destruct. The momentum is with us; the choice of victory is ours.

Chiropractic took a brutal beating in the first 12 rounds, but the 13th round became a major turning point in the fight. The opponent took the worst beating of his career. It was an important round because the opponent was attempting to stop the fight by insisting that we were unworthy to be in the ring with him. The referees disagreed and said we could stay in and continue fighting. Had we lost that round our opponent would have heralded it as the most important round of the entire fight. But as is so typical of the hypocrisy of man, since he lost the round he minimized the importance of the defeat. In reality, it was a very crucial round for both parties. If anyone has any doubt I wish they could have sat in the courtroom and felt the intensity and heard the outcries of the defendants' attorneys.

Every round has been difficult for chiropractic. The weapons in the first 13 rounds included innuendoes, half-truths, material out of context, obscure and obsolete sources of information, exceptions to the rule, and blatantly false statements. When we consider what they were able to accomplish with a lie, imagine what we can accomplish with the truth. In light of the brutal beating our profession took in the first 12 rounds, it is not surprising that the profession suffered with what I call a "battered profession syndrome." As a result, our profession developed early dichotomy and often behaved like "punch drunk," confused fighters. We can see the same phenomenon with a football team that has a long losing streak: there is infighting, finger pointing, and jobs on the line.

An example of the kind of confusion that exists is the rationalizing by some chiropractors that "scientific" is somehow synonymous with medicine. Nothing is farther from true. Chiropractic, medicine, and science are all totally separate and distinct entities and both medicine and

chiropractic must look to science for proof of its effectiveness. There is no substitute.

We are the smaller of the two pugilists within the ring. But as anyone in the fighting game will tell you, character, substance, and experience are all important, especially if the smaller fighter has the "big guns" and knows how to use them effectively.

Chiropractic has never enjoyed a stronger position than it does today, while medicine has never been more vulnerable. We might compare it to an expert in the martial arts who gets a "black belt" in communication.

I'm reminded of Popeye: Brutus the petulant bully would manhandle Popeye until he ate his spinach, and then it became no contest. Our "spinach" comes from knowing the facts and how to expertly communicate them to our patients, the media, the courts, and the policymakers.

We have a distinct advantage over our adversaries. First, they will have to fight our "army" of allies: the British Medical Journal report; the RAND study; our cost effectiveness based on workers' compensation studies; a major HMO study; hospital studies; government studies; the U.S. Office of Public Health; and the most respected universities in America, such as Yale, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins. Second, as we talk about honesty and integrity in health care, of placing the welfare of patients above the selfish interests of the health care providers, it will create an extremely untenable situation for the adversaries. It will become a "good guy versus bad buy" situation, and there will be no doubt that we will have the overwhelming support of the country. I've appeared on hundreds of talk shows and while some may have been more positive than others, none has ever been negative. We have this distinct advantage, and it keeps getting easier as we accumulate more facts to support our position.

The best advise we can give in our corner of the ring is to come out swinging as committed communicators of truth and as champions of the people. Take it to our patients, to the media, to the newspapers, radio, television, legislators, policymakers, and anyone else that will listen. The existing facts are so powerful that it will leave our opponent reeling in the ropes thoroughly thrashed for the final "clean up" stage in the 15th round.

The 15th round will require some significant controlled, symptom-related outcome studies within the most prestigious and respected universities in America. This will put the final nail into the coffin of ignorance and prejudice forever as chiropractic will finally be elevated to its appropriate place in health care.

And finally as a word of caution. Our state and national leadership must take a strong stand against fraud and other abuses in chiropractic or risk having our championship title taken away from us by default. The profession is to be congratulated for having the wisdom and courage to develop the crucially needed Guidelines for Chiropractic Quality Assurance. The legislators, insurance companies, and other policymakers are not asleep and are well aware that our top leadership has committed itself to act with integrity and responsibility.

The average citizen realizes that avarice is found in every group of individuals, doctors not excepted. They will not condemn the entire profession as long as they know that its state and national leaders are committed to insuring honesty and fair play within their profession.

Some state organizations have failed to adopt the national guidelines, looked the other way, and got pulled into a "conspiracy of silence." Everyone will now suffer in these states. It is far wiser that we adopt these guidelines now and not wait for the states to do it for us.

We have two more rounds to go in the fight and we control the outcome. Nothing less than a

"knockout" punch is necessary to win the fight and permanently secure ourselves alongside of, and not beneath, the finest health care providers in the world. We have everything going for us to win in the final two rounds. All we need is the commitment to win.

Chester Wilk, DC
Chicago, Illinois

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