

## Speaking My Mind

Chester Wilk, DC

Editor's Note: When we asked our readers to select the top three "brains" of chiropractic in our June 21, 1991 issue, Dr. Chester Wilk was selected (along with DCs Louis Sportelli and Arlan Fuhr). In response to that honor and to share his vision of chiropractic, Dr. Wilk wrote an article, "Our Immediate Challenges and Priorities," in the August 16, 1991 issue.

Dr. Chester Wilk has graced our pages a number of other times this past year: "Unity Appeal," March 29, 1991; "A Serious Threat to the Future and Integrity of Chiropractic," May 10, 1991; "The Dichotomists within Chiropractic," September 1, 1991.

This year, Dr. Wilk joins "DC" as a regular columnist; his column, "Speaking My Mind" will appear every third issue.

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### Creating Media Impact -- Using the Good, Bad, and the Ugly

We are living within a highly vocal and aggressively competitive society. Everyone is clamoring to be heard, so we need to be media oriented, go to the radio, television, and the press with our message and communicate it with impact or find ourselves drowned out and ignored by many health care consumers. Impact speaking is therefore a necessity and needs to be developed by any chiropractor who wishes to maximize influence with the media. It is especially important with chiropractors because there are many deeply-rooted misconceptions and prejudices against chiropractic which need to be overcome, and conventional or conservative approaches will not suffice with some people.

One way to make an impact is by becoming armed with facts that takes the listening audience back a notch or two. It's the kind of facts that would make them say, "Wow, I didn't know that chiropractic was so great." (The Good.) Or they could say, "I didn't know that 3,000 people die every week from unnecessary surgery and medication reactions; that's tragic." (The Bad.) Or they might say, "I didn't know that the U.S. federal court rendered such a scandalous verdict against the AMA's behavior. That's disgraceful." (The Ugly.)

There are a lot of good facts that we can dwell upon in an interview which take the "high road" and provide a powerful case for chiropractic. These are the facts we need to dwell on the most. However, we need to be candid with some of the bad facts and their consequences which could be reduced or eliminated if we only had closer interprofessional cooperation. The ugly can come from public evidence found in the Wilk et al., law suit; and there are plenty of examples which are disgraceful.

We need to be discreet with how we use the ugly and bad facts in an interview. For impact speaking we need just enough to act as a "seasoning" to the steak: The right amount will enhance the flavor of the steak, not enough will make the presentation dull and tasteless, too much will make it bitter and unpalatable.

We can call the good facts the "highs" and the bad or ugly facts the "lows." For best impact we need to feel out the interviewer or listening audience response and go with the flow. I've been on talk shows where I have been extremely harsh, even by my standards, only to find out that the host came on stronger against the AMA than I.

The worst mistake we can ever make on a talk show is to come off as "sour grapes" or present a "poor me" mentality. We must never go on as public grippers. Instead, we must always be champions of the people, doing what we can to be problem solvers; everyone agrees that the health care system needs major improvements.

We've all heard and seen on radio and television the extremists who find fault with everything in sight, yet never offer any suggestions or solutions. To be effective, we must always offer some kind of solution. For example, we might say, "We must join hands and work together placing the welfare of patients above the vested selfish interests of the health care provider." The statement is a "high" with a hint of a "low" within the same statement. This high/low statement is what makes for impact speaking. It makes what you say provocative but never controversial. For anyone to take an exception to the above statement would be like attacking motherhood, country, and apple pie. There is no controversy.

We never want to be controversial. With controversy, there are two sides to a debate or discussion. It is better to be provocative and have an "open and shut case" where we are right and our adversary is wrong and we totally prevail.

The facts you present must be well-documented using only the finest evidence available. You don't want to use weak documentation that comes under attack and takes away your credibility. We need documentation like the RAND study; the British study; the University of Saskatchewan study done by Dr. David Cassidy and overseen by world renowned medical orthopedist, Dr. Kirkaldy-Willis; the courtroom testimony of Dr. Per Freitag in Wilk et al; the workers' compensation studies from California and Oregon, etc. Studies done by chiropractors will always be more subject to criticism as being self-serving. It is generally more effective to have your competition say nice things about you, and they aren't about to say them if they are not true, and the public knows this.

We need to discredit some of the AMA propaganda and do it with impact. To say that certain AMA positions are false is not enough. You have to not only back it up with solid documentation but in the process expose the propaganda as an unfair self-serving approach that deserves to be condemned. The approach is to make the AMA look so bad for its spreading misinformation that when it reads or hears our comments that it will think twice before continuing its policy of misinformation.

For example, the AMA has disseminated, and continues to disseminate misinformation that chiropractic is "unscientific." As early as its last appeal before the Supreme Court it used the words "scientific" or "unscientific" almost one hundred times. In my talk show interview I bring out the fact that the AMA, by dwelling on this easily proven false statement, is either incredibly stupid or devious or both. This is impact speaking and it can be thoroughly supported by referring to Webster's Dictionary as to what constitutes "scientific." The major studies done by world class researchers -- MDs, PhD, DCs -- agree that chiropractic is indeed scientifically based, although it is not exactly scientific and needs more research. By the way, this same thing applies to medicine. Hence, you not only discredit the AMA's statements with this approach but do it with impact. This is what is often needed to redirect old and well-established falsehoods that have been deeply rooted for years. Prejudice and ignorance die hard.

Another "institutionalized falsehood" that the AMA has disseminated for years is that chiropractic

is "dangerous." We can show how independent actuarial studies for insurance companies show that chiropractic is far safer than medicine. This is a "high" response that is effective and makes our point. However, we can take it one step further and show how the AMA registered "disappointment" because its study of the safety of chiropractic proved that chiropractic was not injuring people. This response shows the ugly and bigoted side of the AMA, an obvious low. A balanced presentation of the high and the low leaves greater impact.

The AMA for years has attacked the educational process of chiropractic colleges as being inferior, hoping to "dry up" the chiropractic colleges. Evidence was brought up by Wilk et al., showed that the AMA, in concert with different state medical societies, were actually undermining efforts made by chiropractic colleges to upgrade their educational base. Chiropractic colleges contacted C.W. Post College in Long Island, New York, Morehead College in Kentucky, and St. Thomas College in St. Paul, Minnesota, hoping to establish a double affiliation so that prechiropractic students could take some preprofessional courses at these colleges. The AMA, acting in concert with its state affiliates acted to scuttle these programs. This could be compared to the "book burning" incidences. This example offers one of the "ugliest" and lowest "lows." Not a pretty picture, to say the least, but painfully truthful that could be used with select audiences.

Some chiropractors may feel that the "low" responses, which are quite embarrassing to medicine, may be a bit harsh when we are trying to make friends within medical circles. We can spare the conscientious MDs by adding that the AMA is a trade organization that does not speak for 60 percent of the medical doctors who do not belong or necessarily subscribe to AMA policies, and that there are many fine, sincere, dedicated MDs in the field. If some MDs are still embarrassed then it may reflect their own mentality and with these kind of friends, who needs enemies?

The fact is that we must remember that the AMA tried to "contain and eliminate" this profession from the face of this earth. Even though the AMA is down and beaten in court, at the time of this writing, there still has never been any genuine indication that it has repented for its wrong doings or wishes to be cooperative with us in the interest of patients, even though very credible studies show chiropractic to be a superior therapy in select areas. This is the bottom line. Until the AMA chooses to mend its ways it does not deserve to be spared public criticism and disgrace. It made its own bed and can sleep in it.

Propaganda is a powerful tool which the AMA has used for years. If you repeat a lie often enough and loud enough it eventually becomes accepted as the truth. This is exactly what the AMA has done for years and so the chiropractic profession is now suffering the ill effects of this propaganda. But if we can bring out these facts on radio and television talk shows with a virtual "army" of skilled chiropractic communicators, we can not only counter their propaganda but reverse the trend of public opinion. When we realize what propagandists have been able to accomplish with lies, just imagine what we can accomplish with the truth. Since we have truth on our side we will most assuredly prevail. But we must have the professional realization and commitment to become more media oriented and become impact communicators.

It would behoove the AMA to "make peace" with the chiropractic profession. It wouldn't have to keep "looking over its shoulder" to see what we will say or do next in response to its unlawful and disgraceful conduct. It would behoove the AMA to have us as allies working together for the welfare of all patients. Perhaps some day the AMA will get smart and recognize the wisdom of cooperating with us. If this ever happens then everyone will gain -- even the AMA.

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