

FBI!

WHY?

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"Health-Fraud Inquiry Leads to 100 Arrests"

So declared a headline in the July 1, 1992 issue of the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). The article described the undercover operation that government officials are calling the biggest "criminal fraud investigation of the health care industry." (See the front page article in this issue by ICA General Counsel James Harrison.)

According to the WSJ article, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director William Sessions held a news conference in which he said the "individuals charged were involved in numerous schemes to cheat both private insurance companies and Medicaid." Mr. Sessions said the "arrests were the culmination of a nearly two year investigation."

The article went on to disclose:

"... millions of dollars of assets were seized"...

"More than 1,000 FBI agents and 120 federal law-enforcement officers participated yesterday in making the arrests, searches, and seizures in more than 50 cities across the U.S."

"Dr. (Louis) Sullivan (Secretary of Health and Human Services) blamed this and other alleged health-fraud schemes for the soaring medical costs plaguing the country."

"Insurers, including Medicaid, were charged multiple times."

"Officials said there was no indication that the scams were part of a nationwide ... conspiracy. They said the investigation is continuing and could result in more people arrested, including more doctors."

Now that I have your attention, there were NO chiropractors involved in this investigation. The 100 arrests involved mostly pharmacists and MDs.

Before you begin celebrating, think about this: Did you think this article was about DCs?

Do we have some dirty laundry exposed?

If so, who will be the ones to reveal it, the chiropractic profession or the Federal Bureau of Investigation?

Please don't be confused, I firmly believe that 97 percent of the chiropractors are practicing in an ethical, honest manner. But that still leaves a lot of DCs who may be currently under investigation. Even one percent of the profession equates to almost 500 chiropractors.

If the FBI began this investigation two years ago, what are they working on now? Or perhaps have been for the past year? What will the next headline read?

We have already seen this type of investigation in a number of states. Maybe it is time to wake up and smell the coffee.

Of course, we can always use our standard comeback: "They're picking on us because we're chiropractors." Or better yet: "The AMA is after the chiropractic profession again."

In these times of tight money and soaring health care expenses, there are some pretty simple equations you should remember:

Tight Money + Soaring Costs = Investigation

Investigation + Health Care Fraud = Arrests

Arrests + Health Care Fraud Convictions + Media Coverage = Damaged or Ruined Public Image

It doesn't matter how much money we put towards research to demonstrate our effectiveness, if the public begins to believe that we are betraying their trust.

Every time you knowingly allow any kind of fraud or abuse to be practiced by a fellow chiropractor, you are knowingly allowing our public image to be damaged. Yes, only some of the worst cases will appear on the evening news, but large deserts are made of small grains of sand. One cheated chiropractic patient can influence the thinking of an entire community.

Chiropractic care has survived because of one thing: the loyalty of our patients. They are our future!

If you know of any abuse, report it to your state board or association. If they won't do anything about it, start screaming and go over their head. If you have a state board that is trying to clean-up your state, encourage it.

The future of the entire chiropractic profession may depend on how much negative press we get over the next five years. This is the kind of thing that can turn politicians and news reporters against an entire profession.

Remember: You are responsible for what happens to this profession.

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