

## Chiropractic, Computer, Growing Up, and Nirvana

Okay, by now everyone has heard of computers, or at least seen an ad on TV or in one of the journals so that the cultural shock has been eased. Probably most of you even have one. But what have they really done for you and your practice?

### Humble Beginnings

I practice in San Jose, California, the hub of the "Silicon Valley." I've had a computer in the office for 12 years. I've made just about every mistake one could make in the computer world. Had some good luck too!

Starting with the fruit type computer, I really enjoyed the green and black screen games and label-making program with a little word processing thrown in to sweeten the deal. Boy, that was great! I could do my own newsletter and make labels. But I had to move one disk in, then out, put a second one in, then out, then a third, etc. That got old very fast, however, the computer wasn't that fast. The newsletters, well, passed for a "nice attempt" as described by one of my patients who is a printer.

My next step was to speed up the system. Faster megahertz, I was told. Do you know why they call it megahertz? It hurts when you have to pay for the faster running part that goes in the machine. I wanted the utility company to pump the electricity faster but was told by a computer man, "That's a funny one, sign here."

Now I've got this fast computer. The software (the stuff that goes in the slot) has to be changed. Not only could I buy a program that made labels and newsletters, it would do billing. "Sign here."

My billing person loved it. It took twice as long to do the billing, but I had a fast, full-fledged computer in the office.

### Don't Visit Another Doctor's Office

Don't ever visit another doctor's office unless you have the fastest, easiest, best computer and software available. That was my big mistake.

Can your computer do this? Right before my very eyes appeared a day sheet. How did he do that? Of course I had the fruit kind and his was a clone of some big computer company. My computer would have to be up-graded; to do that day sheet thing, I had to get into an entirely different line. Also, there were only a few software programs available to do an entire accounting thing and they cost more than my house. The day sheet doctor said that there were tons more programs for this kind of computer.

That's right. "Sign here."

### Moving Right Along

I'm getting good at this stuff now. Got my megahertz up to "eleventy" zillion, can print out labels as fast as my wife goes through money, the newsletters flow as if I were Stephen King writing a new novel, and my printer/patient wants to take lessons. I'm just moving right along.

Then -- panic. The computer shut itself down. Insufficient memory.

Memory? Memory? What happened? I can remember all my patients why can't the stupid computer?

A frantic call to the computer man.

"Need more memory, Doc?"

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I didn't think you would need it."

Ten days later: hardware plus service agreement. "Sign here."

I don't know about you, but my billing person brought a hammer to the office. Caught her just in time -- a rope with a noose tied in it. I ducked just in time, and some kind of long, "swordy" things with a sharp point that missed me by millimeters, tore three shirts. And she went from speaking intelligently to making grunting sounds that would put a pig farm to shame.

Now I'm starting to think, maybe this computer stuff is a mini government. Put all kinds of money into it and it still wants more for doing less. And kills off your staff.

I better rethink this computer thing.

Chiro Software

Eureka! I find a journal ad that "will solve all my computer problems." Quick! Where? How? My billing person stopped grunting, talks to herself in low voices, and stares at me. Ever freeze in the summer?

So, I bought this Chiro-Premo-Billo software. Seemed to work fine. Until one day, while printing an extra long statement, my billing person let out a screech that I still hear rattling around in my ears.

"What happened?" I asked.

"You did this! You are trying to drive me crazy. And it's working."

"What happened?" I asked again preparing to run for my life.

"It didn't balance forward to the second page."

Most of you know by now that any accounting program must balance forward. It's part of the package; standard in accounting and part of the protocol that must be adhered to in sound accounting practices.

A call to Chiro-Premo-Billo gets us an "Oooops." They would correct the problem by sending an update disk. Good. But not so good. The update disk costs.

"Why," I ask. "It should have been part of the program."

"You are only the second one to complain about it, and besides it would take up too much memory. Also, would you be interested in purchasing our latest, 'bestest' Chiro-Premo-Billo Executive Keyboard Wizbang? Only \$3,000 more."

I started thinking, why should I buy yet another program from the same company that oooopsed me just a few sentences ago and was starting to charge for every little thing? There was little or no support, but the sales department nearly chalked up another easy mark.

"I'll get back to you." No automatic "sigh here" this time.

Then, this lightning bolt hit me. Why don't I ask the billing person what is wrong with the program? I figured that she did all the work. I only paid for the computer stuff, I didn't have to work with it and what any salesperson told me seemed to be okay.

Did I get an ear full: postings got lost; too may keys to push to back out of a section to get to another; archives totally too cumbersome; posting to the day sheet had about 37 steps too many; menus took you all over the place, not much logic to the flow; and it was like trying to push a railroad car up hill. I didn't know what she meant by the railroad car, but I was not going to ask.

The Search for Nirvana

Okay, I'll look into it. My look into it is most likely different than your look into it. Mine is that I will research it, not do anything, and hope it will fix itself or go away.

My research revealed the following:

1. Most software companies don't have chiropractic software. They would be more than happy to "modify" their medical software, but you lose some features in the process and it costs much more.
2. Some chiropractic software companies try to sell you "packages": one for billing, one for accounting, one for narrative writing, etc. Add up all the parts and you may have to sell your first born.
3. Some chiropractic software companies insist that you buy their hardware in addition to the software or sell you software at many times a reasonable cost.
4. Some chiropractic software companies have limited packages. These do the basic accounting but in a year or less you'll have to up-grade anyway because your practice got too large or you visited another doctor's office that showed what really can be done with the right hardware and software combination. You end up buying from scratch, thereby wasting time, money, and perhaps a billing person or two.
5. Some chiropractic software companies know what you want but don't have the know-how to be state of the art.
6. One chiropractic software company that I know, knows what you want, what you will need, has the state of the art know-how, is willing and able to support you with an 800 number,

and is actually friendly.

Which one would you seek out? And don't forget the billing person. If I am dreaming that I have found the right one, nobody, but nobody, wake me up.

I know that I have found my nirvana.

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SEPTEMBER 1992