

Our Immediate Challenges and Priorities

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The goals for the nineties are many and varied. The stakes are high and the rewards or penalties can be staggering. Consider the following: establishing solid scientific studies; enlarging our largest chiropractic association; addressing ethical conduct by chiropractors; and patient education on chiropractic. Let's take each category by the number.

Establishing Solid Scientific Studies

We have a great start with the recent British study, the retrospective workers' compensation studies, and the RAND study, but we need to expand it to cover chiropractic results with gastrointestinal, respiratory, and headache patients. The federal government will be establishing which profession will be the "gate keeper" for which ailment. Failure to establish some scientific studies to verify that chiropractic is a viable way to treat select ailments will result in losing our rights to treat these ailments. We have an estimated three years to accomplish this goal; it deserves top priority. Anecdotal studies are not valid scientific proof. This establishes why the following goal is more important than ever.

Enlarging Our Largest Chiropractic Organization

The largest and best organization going for chiropractic is the American Chiropractic Association (ACA). This is not a partisan or political position. It is plain common horse sense. This does not imply that the ACA is perfect by any means. For one thing it is too small, and if we combined it with our other national organization, it would still be too small. We need to initiate a massive membership drive for one organization which clearly represents a majority of all chiropractors in America. Hence, start with the biggest organization and enlarge upon it.

Chiropractors should be able to take the position: "I disagree with you and so I will join your organization and change it to my image. I will persevere until I succeed and no one can ever call me a quitter." Hence, move in and change it.

Instead the mentality seems to be: "If at first I don't succeed, I'll quit and form another organization." This is the most foolish and self-destructive mentality I see within chiropractic. Hanging on to dogma and contrived principles when in reality 95 percent of the profession are somewhere in the middle, while the radical fringe in both directions keep us divided.

I strongly urge that every morally principled chiropractor unite behind one organization and recruit new members. It is an irrevocable law in life that we cannot experience true professional success without first giving -- and joining the largest chiropractic organization is the first step to professional success. Do yourself and your profession a favor and join up today.

Addressing Ethical Content

Patient exploitation or fraud within our ranks can injure chiropractic more lethally than the AMA or any other "outside" force. We get so little exposure in proportion to our merit that any negative exposure we receive is amplified a hundred fold against chiropractic. Hence, we need to adopt a

tough but fair policy with members -- then brag about it to legislators, insurance companies, department of registration, radio, TV, and the press. There is no finer PR for chiropractic than letting others know our leadership will not tolerate any improper conduct.

It is imperative that we adopt one standard of care, quality of care, and code of ethics. Again, the necessity of one strong national organization is evident and mandatory. I list these together since they are interdependent. A chiropractor practicing within these established standards will be protected from frivolous law suits and it will also serve to provide a basis for punishing wrong-doers. If we don't establish these guidelines than others will do it for us and we will most assuredly not find them to be as fair and equitable. We can and should do this within one year.

Patient Education on Chiropractic

Most of us will agree that our profession does not receive enough positive exposure commensurate with chiropractic's therapeutic value. We've all heard or used the phrase that chiropractic is "the world's best kept secret." It need not be and we can make things happen to change it.

To fill this much-needed gap I have been pioneering a "Round Table" program for chiropractors to learn how to get on radio and TV and then be able to provide the most effective information supporting the safety, effectiveness, and superiority of chiropractic in some areas. We need hundreds of well-trained media chiropractors.

Public opinion can have a powerful impact on public use, entrance into hospitals, acceptance by the government in future health care programs, monies that can funnel into chiropractic research programs, etc. The impact is endless but we must make things happen by taking the necessary steps. Availing ourselves of the massive free media coverage is the answer.

"Star Search" can be another outstanding idea for getting the chiropractic message out to the public. Many chiropractic patients have nationally recognizable faces. These include top athletes, rock and roll stars, entertainers, movie stars, entrepreneurs, etc. They should be approached and asked by their chiropractors if they would contribute a free televised public service announcement for chiropractic. They could go to their local TV studio and our national organization could pick up the cost of the studio time (which would be nominal) and then send video dubs to all of the TV stations in America. Imagine if Carol Channing, Arnold Schwarzenegger or Burt Reynolds would make the following video tape: "Hello, my name is ___. I think we can all agree that maintaining good health is very important to everyone, and through good diet, proper fresh air, rest and exercise we can help ourselves stay healthier. Another good thing we can do is consider chiropractic health care. While no profession has all the answers, in some instances chiropractic health care is outstanding. I know, from personal experience and that's why I'm doing this public service announcement for chiropractic." (A public service announcement of the American Chiropractic Association.)

The challenges are many, and in some of the above goals we cannot afford the luxury of taking an entire decade. What we do in the next couple of years will alter chiropractic's history. Will we be a viable profession or a training ground for other professions to step in and take it over? Our conduct will determine our future.

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