

It's Time for a Change

AMERICANS LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE

Steve Kelly, managing editor

The cover title of Time magazine for November 4, 1991, "The New Age of Alternative Medicine," expresses the growing sentiment in America today for alternatives to allopathic medicine.

The cover story, "Why New Age Medicine Is Catching On," states that Americans are spending 27 billion dollars a year on alternative medicine, a powerful indication of the public's dissatisfaction with visiting the MD for what ails them.

Made abundantly clear throughout the article is the short-sighted approach and the limitations of medicine based on crisis intervention, drugs, and surgery, instead of a preventive, holistic approach that seeks to keep people from becoming ill in the first place.

A poll of 500 adults for Time/CNN on October 23, 1991 by Yankelovich Clancy Shulman, asked the question:

Have you ever sought medical help from:

Chiropractor 31%
Acupuncturist 6%
Herbalist 5%
Homeopathic doctor 3%
Faith healer 2%

Of those who have used alternative medicine, 84 percent said they would again.

Of those who had never sought help from alternative medicine, 62 percent said they would if conventional medicine failed to help them.

The survey is interesting in what it includes and doesn't: if chiropractic is alternative medicine, why isn't physical therapy on the list? If faith healing is included in the survey, why not add voodoo, for example?

Pluses and Minuses

Chiropractic is mentioned a numerous times in the article. Judge for yourself how the profession was represented:

Positive Statements:

-- "If you are like millions of other Americans, you my find yourself at the doorstep of a homeopathic doctor or ... a chiropractor or any of the other innumerable practitioners of 'alternative medicine.'"

Comment: The good news is that when people seek alternative care, chiropractic is their first choice." (Refer to the Time poll.)

-- "They'll (baby boomers) see the medical doc for appendicitis and check-in for tune-ups and TLC with the chiropractor."

Comment: Tender loving care is not a phrase often heard from people describing a visit to the MD.

-- "Or he (a friend) knows a chiropractor who does wonders with sore backs."

Comment: Word-of-mouth referral is certainly a big part of many chiropractic practices, but the profession needs national word-of-mouth for significant gains.

-- "... some fairly rigorous studies have shown their manipulations of the spine to be effective in relieving lower-back pain."

Comment: Research is just a "dry subject" to many, but it gets respect from the media and government.

-- "...some 30 U.S. hospitals have chiropractors on staff."

Comment: infinitesimal inclusion for chiropractic, but it's a start. There are nearly 7,000 hospitals in the U.S. What better place or goal for chiropractic than to work for inclusion in hospitals?

Negative Statements:

-- "Orthopedic surgeons have even been known to refer patients to back crackers..."

Comment: "Back crackers" and other derogatory labels of chiropractic are heard less often, but they're difficult to get rid of entirely. Psychiatrists live with the moniker "shrink;" MDs are still sometimes called "butchers;" lawyers are called "shysters," etc.

-- "Chiropractors speak of subtle misalignments or 'subluxations' of the spine, but other doctors usually cannot detect them."

Comment: Research, research, and more research.

-- "'The nightmare,' says University of Chicago neurologist Clifford Saper, 'is seeing someone who has a spinal cord tumor who's been going to a chiropractor for years instead of to a doctor.'"

Comment: DCs can diagnose spinal tumors. P.S. to Clifford: DCs are doctors.

A Personal Adventure into Alternative Care

Including with the article is one gentleman's personal perspective, "My Excellent Alternative Adventure," that relates the benefit of chiropractic he experienced for his low back pain, his bad shoulder, and stiff neck.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of his testimonial comes when he says, "I currently use a mix-and-match approach to medical problems." It's becoming more evident every day that the public, although still going to the MD, is increasingly seeking the benefit of adjunctive care, whether chiropractic, acupuncture, homeopathy, or other alternative health care.

The Time article, above all else, indicates that many people with health care problems are not automatically turning to the nearest MD for help. People are questioning the old model and are looking and finding answers to their health care problems outside the MDs' domain. The "mix-and-match" approach to health problems is gaining impetus as the intelligent choice among

independent thinking, health conscious Americans. Fortunately, chiropractic is there.

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