

Oh, Nuthin'

Richard Tyler, DC

How well we can all remember when we got our first license, the one to drive a car. For me it was as if I had just been given the right to join the human race. No more sitting on the seat next to the wheel while a friend was driving. Now it was my turn to control the car and in some esoteric way start controlling the rest of my life as well.

From a very early age in all our lives we're impressed with the value of a "license." A license meant that we had worked for something -- been qualified -- and then given permission through the license to do these things we had studied.

So it was, when I received my license to practice chiropractic. It wasn't, however, easy to come by. During the board examination it was discovered that groups from the less sophisticated schools had been privy to the information that the exam was to be a repeat of one given several years earlier. Apparently they got hold of it, and when the test was actually given, would complete the answers faster than the rest of us had time to write our identification numbers at the top of the first page.

When the cheating was discovered, the board impounded the exams, thus eliminating a favorable curve score and sat on the results for months. In the meantime I rented an office and prayed.

Just about every week I would call Sacramento from North Hollywood to see if they had the results. After what seemed like a black hole in a time warp, a friend called to say that he had called and that they had the results.

A lump the size of a beach ball formed in my throat as I fumbled for the phone. "I - I'd like to know the results of the exam." I said almost breathlessly.

"Your name?"

"Richard Tyler."

"Just a minute please."

For the next few seconds I lived and died a thousand times. Then came the voice back again with a simple "Congratulations, Dr. Tyler." There has never been, before or since, the exact type of exultation I felt at that moment.

Over the years that followed, reality has sobered me into the accepting the fact that my license to practice chiropractic didn't really confer on me the right to do very much more than a shoe clerk in a shoe store -- in fact, less.

The other day I imagined my office being visited by a member of the "Straight/Mixer Scientific Board of Chiropractic Examiners" and it wasn't pleasant.

Board Member: Dr. Tyler, we understand that you've been practicing homeopathy.

RHT: Yes. I've found it to be a safe alternative to dangerous drugs.

BM: Well, you can't do that.

RHT: Why not? Homeopathy might really be called a form of micronutrition since all the substances are naturally occurring and highly diluted. This means that they are so safe that the public can go to a health food store and pick them up without a prescription of any kind.

BM: But you're a licensed chiropractor so you can't use that in your practice.

RHT: You mean that "Uncle Bill" or Aunt Minnie" can purchase and recommend homeopathic remedies all they want but I can't? What about my rights as an American citizen? Are you saying that my license to practice chiropractic takes away those rights?

BM: Well, in this case yes -- I guess so. But think of all the other things you can do.

RHT: Like what? A high school dropout under the direction of an MD can draw blood, while I, who was taught in school to perform venipuncture, can't.

BM: Well ...

RHT: The same is true of physical therapy. Some kid, working in an MD's office can use all kinds of modalities under the direction of someone who never studied the subject in medical school. As for x-ray, I remember going into one MD's office who **** had so little education in the subject that he didn't know where the off/on switch was. In other words, all manner of people with little or no education, or often even a license, can do as much or more than I can, with all my years of study, examinations, and licensing.

BM: Well, you're a chiropractor and you can adjust.

RHT: Big deal.

BM: Wh ... what did you say?

RHT: That's right. Sure, through education and practice we know more about the human frame, body mechanics, and specific adjusting than any other health professional, but so what? All the public knows is that they might know of a bartender who can "crack backs" or some masseur or physical therapist who can make bones "pop." It's not "special" like cutting you up with scalpels or drugging you with exotic chemicals. How can anything be special if just about anyone is allowed to do it? And to top that off, we have chiropractors who write books for public consumption on how to adjust grandma on your kitchen table and now even put out videotapes on the subject. And let's not forget applied kinesiology being marketed to the public as a form of diagnosis and treatment called "tough for health."

Woe to me if I so much as suggest to a patient that the medications they might be taking might kill them. That would be "practicing medicine without a license." "Brother Ted" or "Sister Alice" can get a PDR at the book store and say all they want to about any and all the drugs they think are good or bad to friends and neighbors, but not me. In other words, the chiropractic license doesn't give us very much to do that the rest of the public can't; in fact, it even restricts our rights as American citizens by forbidding to us even the most basic rights. You might say the chiropractic license doesn't give you much more than an excuse for others to harass you.

BM: Boy, are you in trouble.

RHT: Right. Especially since I have a chiropractic license.

Don't get me wrong -- I love chiropractic more than anything. It's just that I didn't realize all that I had to give up when I made that call to Sacramento some 22 years ago.

RHT

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