

Generating New Patients While Maintaining a Professional and Positive Public Image

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Doctors of chiropractic, who are not well-established or entering into practice for the first time, are faced with the age-old dilemma of how to acquire new patients. Coping with our fear and our reluctance to approach the small business and industrial community is probably the biggest deterrent to successful marketing. I doubt that any of us do not know that the best way to obtain new patients is not advertising, whether it be yellow pages, value pac coupons, newspapers, direct mail, or billboards. The best way is live, face-to-face contact with people -- "The Public." It is also well-known among practice-building consultants that screening exams at shopping malls, K-mart, etc. is a method of choice. It is also well-known that most doctors established in practice resign themselves to low-volume practice, rather than confront the indignity of following the above methods of spinal screening. They may have short-term value, but not without compromising the professional image of yourself and chiropractic in the community.

Unfortunately, chiropractic does not have the luxury of television shows depicting the miracles of chiropractic care. Therefore, the doctor of chiropractic must be prepared to educate the community on what we have to offer. The most ethical and the most professional way to educate the community is through public appearances.

How do you educate the vast majority of a community through public appearances? The best way to reach the public is where they work. Industry and businesses all over the world suffer the loss of billions of dollars every year due to physical stress in the workplace.

These physical stresses are largely due to poor posture in the workplace, related to improper positioning of computer terminals, chairs, desk arrangements, along with improper lifting and body mechanics on the part of the employees. The doctor of chiropractic is the most qualified health care professional to analyze, educate and correct these types of physically-related problems. Therefore, there is no shortage of new patients. It is a matter of reaching the employees and educating them on what you have to offer.

I have personally lectured to a large number of small businesses and companies on the reduction of physical stress in the workplace. This has resulted in a large number of new patients, along with increased respect in the community.

However, you cannot penetrate the business community by selling chiropractic or making comparisons about how much more effective chiropractic is, compared to medicine.

A successful way of approaching the business community is accomplished through creating a recognition on behalf of the employers of the need for knowledge of chiropractic in the workplace. This way, the employers see the value in our services and are willing to allow you to speak to their employees. In my experience, they saw me as a doctor who specializes in the prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders; nothing else mattered.

It is important to reassure them that it is your intention to offer those employees with legitimate

back discomfort, an opportunity to be evaluated through their regular insurance benefits. This puts the responsibility of health back on the employee to discourage future workers' compensation liabilities and absenteeism related to physical stress in the workplace. This relieves the employer's fears of your turning all of their employees into workers' compensation cases.

Chiropractic has received a bad name with many employers, due to the abuse of workers' compensation insurance by a select few in our profession. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary to relieve the fears of some employers before being allowed to enter their workplace.

There are many employers who have good chiropractic insurance benefits for their employees. There are many employees who need our chiropractic services. Employers do not mind if their employees use their own insurance benefits to see chiropractors, especially when their employees become happier, healthier, and more productive as a result of chiropractic care.

We still have an excellent opportunity to educate the public on the value of chiropractic in the community. It is now our job to educate them in an ethical and professional manner. Do not allow yourself to be influenced by various practice-management consultants, in regard to unprofessional and unethical forms of generating new patients.

Remember, we are all in this together!

APRIL 1990