

We Are Not Alone

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In a school catalogue, I recently read the following on the principles upon which the profession was founded:

1. "The body tends to be self-healing and self-regulatory in the disease processes. The ability to maintain integrity in a continually changing external environment is mediated through an elaborate communication network. The communication network embraces the circulatory and neuromusculoskeletal systems.
2. "Intimate interrelationships exist between structure and function at all levels of biologic organization.
3. "Abnormalities of the neuromusculoskeletal system are invariably present during disease. When subjected to manually applied forces, these abnormalities are ameliorated coincidentally with clinical improvement of the patient.
4. "Health is an equilibrium state and maintaining this state requires constant biological adjustment. While employing manipulation, the physician utilizes other recognized modalities for diagnosis and treatment. All modalities of treatment are based upon an evaluation of the patient's personal state of development, family, and social environment."

The preceding sounds pretty good to me and sums up the way the majority of chiropractic physicians feel. The only catch is that it didn't come from a catalogue for a chiropractic college but rather from a leading osteopathic medical school. And the catalogue wasn't from some DO school at the turn of the century but from one covering 1988-90.

As a profession, we have a tendency to feel isolated from the mainstream of the healing arts. The "maverick" among the "orthodox," and it is the fostering of this idea that has lead to this as a virtual public image.

In their zeal to be "accepted," some chiropractors have deserted their philosophical heritage for something more "acceptable." While the osteopathic branch of medicine may not be the largest in the way of numbers, the allopaths have either tried to absorb them or left them alone. No longer openly derisive of their philosophy, "orthodox" allopathic medicine "accepts" osteopathy as a legitimate branch of medicine. Why? Because they have no choice in the matter. While the majority of the DOs confine their practices to traditionally accepted forms of medicine, the profession, as an entity, has never forsaken its philosophical heritage and has active councils promulgating osteopathic manipulative principles.

The lesson for us -- if there is one -- is that the chiropractic profession exists because what we do works and what we do is based upon the concept that structure affects function. Our biggest problem is the fanatics on both ends of the spectrum -- phenomenon that unfortunately seems indigenous only to us. It's doubtful if there's an osteopathic physician who tries to legislate his colleagues out of existence because he doesn't practice with the same philosophy. Yet, there are chiropractors so twisted in their zeal to extirpate that which they consider "impure" that they will

work and spend all the money they can raise to legislate anyone who doesn't agree with their philosophy out of existence.

Of course the other end that believes in nothing but strict treatment of musculoskeletal problems is just as bad as they travel around the country like hired guns employed to destroy, through the courts, anyone who even vaguely suggests that an adjustment might aid in organic function.

In the middle is that vast majority that impotently sits on its political gluteals while the fringes tear at the meat of the profession like jackals.

Give me the group who will vigorously defend the needs of the majority of the profession which happens to follow the principles currently espoused by the osteopathic profession. With the exception of the terms I deleted referring to osteopathy, the principles the osteopathic profession professes could very well be ours.

What we need is a good dose of integrity without it being laced with the insanity of our extremists. The integrity comes with the adherence to founding principles of our profession. Adherence without shame. Adherence with the pride that what we do is one of the oldest but yet newest forms of healing practiced. What chiropractic did was to codify and turn the manipulation of hippocrates, itinerant bone-setters, and osteopaths into an art of specific adjustive procedures, to specifically aid the body in regulating organic function. This was, and is, our gift to those we serve. This is something to be proud of.

Forget about all our residents in the chiropractic twilight zone -- what the majority of us believe and practice will survive because it works. In the meantime, however, we must promulgate our convictions with dignity and pride. No one can do that for us -- only the majority who has been silent for too long.

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