

We Get Letters

DC Controversial But Fun

Dear Editor:

Just a short note to say how much I look forward to reading *DC* each time. The articles you print are always informative or, at the very least, controversial and fun.

I particularly like reading about research and new "findings" in chiropractic science, and I've also enjoyed Dr. Quigley's backward glances at Palmer during the "B.J." days, as well as your book reviews.

Many thanks to you and your staff at MPA for all the fine hours of reading.

*Thomas Lindsay, DC
Prato, Italy*

"Officially Speaking"

Dear Editor:

Your editorial in the November 15, 1989 issue of *Dynamic Chiropractic* raises an interesting set of problems at chiropractic colleges. To answer your question, "Is there any kind of critical exchange and debate?" on our campuses, I believe the answer is: very little. I find a reluctance among all too many doctors in the colleges (as in the field) to challenge one another's ideas in public and in print. Perhaps because so many of the public debates and controversies in chiropractic have been conducted "ad hominem," rather than addressing the issues, many if not most DCs seem undisposed to challenge the irrational, inappropriate and/or unethical ideas which make the rounds in the profession. Perhaps because critical exchange and debate have not been role-modeled in previous generations, there are few to role-model these activities among our faculty. It is a part of the discipline and art of the science to which DCs have rarely been exposed, perhaps due to long isolation from the universities, teaching hospitals and the wider health science community.

One of the consequences is the difficulty college policy-setters have in seeking to balance the educational commitment to the free-flow of information and knowledge, with the need to recognize and confront the irrational, inappropriate and/or unethical in chiropractic. It may often be easier for some schools to ban certain speakers from their campuses than to deal with difficult issues in need of critical debate. By prohibiting an individual from speaking at a chiropractic college rather than using the occasion to teach through debate, our schools have inadvertently helped to perpetuate the gobbledygook in the profession.

I would love to see Dr. Sid Williams invite Dr. Winterstein from National College to discuss his notion of chiropractic medicine with Life College's faculty and students. Even better, Dr. Winterstein might invite Dr. Williams up for a "money hum" and some critical discussion. Would National's faculty be prepared to challenge, tune for tune? I'm picking on these two schools, but I

think the examples are illustrative of what doesn't often occur at our colleges. Nor do we have enough critical case presentations where clinicians critique one another's diagnoses, treatment plans, and case results. One rarely encounters critical comparisons and contrasts in chiropractic methods, despite the diversity of techniques. DeBoer¹ characterizes the chiropractic colleges as the world's finest trade schools, but lacking in serious scholarship and research.

I believe that the profession's tradition of colleges run by authoritative, charismatic leaders has also contributed to the paucity of scholarly debate. Our faculty have too often been hired on the basis of their agreement with or willingness to submit to the prevailing college president's or trustee's "philosophy." Faculty inbreeding further contributes to this phenomenon and encourages conformity in theory and practice. Loyalty to an institution has too long been confused with orthodoxy in the faculty member's stated professional and clinical beliefs. For many decades, a great number of our college leaders have been far more concerned with fiscal survival than with "luxuries" such as academic freedom and scholarly debate. In such environments our faculty have not yet learned their prerogatives and responsibilities for leadership in chiropractic thought. We still have much maturing to do.

I certainly agree with you that our colleges need greatly increased assistance from the field if they are to rise above their current poverty and typical 80% tuition-dependence for their operating budgets. But money alone will not relieve the deficiencies in scholarship at so many of our educational institutions. What is needed, I suspect, is a change in attitude among our trustees, administrators, and faculty. We need a metamorphosis among our college leaders whereby they encourage faculty and students to argue the issues on their merits, with hard data whenever possible, rather than avoiding disputes or arguing personalities. Money will surely help but, more importantly, we need a chiropractic "glasnost" wherein open and objectively-based disagreements are encouraged. If our faculty will lead the way, I believe the profession would be pleased to seek guidance there. Until such time, however, many college leaders may continue to be fearful that they may seemingly appear to endorse controversial figures by inviting them to their schools.

Again, thank you for raising these important issues.

Reference:

1. DeBoer, K.F. "Eine Kleine Nacht Musing." American Journal of Chiropractic Medicine March 1988; 1(1):41-3.

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