

Do You Know What You're Reading?

Donald M. Petersen Jr., BS, HCD(hc), FICC(h), Publisher

In a publisher's daily effort to attract advertisers, there is always the temptation to offer editorial space as an inducement. There are basically four methods to provide exposure to chiropractic advertisers and their products that are being utilized by chiropractic publications currently read by the profession. The question is:

What, if any, editorial exposure do you want chiropractic publications to give to their advertisers?

Perhaps you are not familiar with the various ways in which editorial space is being used to influence how you feel about various products and services. Some of these methods have limited effect. Some appear to be advertising in editorial clothing, while others are carefully designed messages.

The simplest form of "advertorial" is the new product press release. This is a rather unassuming announcement about a new product. It is written by the seller in an effort to gain your interest in the product. The publication takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information, even though it appears as editorial or news.

The next form is that of an ad disguised as a sales article about the product. This sales article is also written by the seller. Instead of simply trying to announce a new product to you in an effort to gain your interest, this is a full blown "story." While it tries to be interesting, the real purpose of this advertorial is to subtly sell you on the product. The publication, again, takes absolutely no responsibility for the content of the sales article and doesn't wish to be accountable for misinformation. Some of these sales articles end with a reader service card number.

There is at least one publication that includes solicitation of sales articles as part of their advertising media kit. To quote from the instructions to advertisers entitled, Developing a Winning Article, they read: "Your article should provide in-depth coverage of your product; it should take over where your advertising leaves off and should compliment your sales promotion efforts."

Another way in which a publication can present a product to the members of the chiropractic profession is through critical review. A critical review can be performed on all like products by various manufacturers. If performed correctly, the publication utilizes multiple examiners to examine and evaluate each product which are then presented. This analysis would present positive and negative aspects about the product as well as how it compared to similar products by different manufacturers. This is very similar to the format used by Consumer Reports.

Finally, there is the help-u-sell advertorial. This is an article or story written by the editorial staff of a publication in an effort to assist an advertiser in selling their goods and services and to make them better known. This kind of advertorial is in effect a "paid endorsement" by the publication. Help-u-sell articles are offered by a publication in an effort to solicit advertising. This form of advertorial has recently been utilized by one chiropractic publication in an effort to assist certain practice management companies become better known and better thought of.

You can't blame a company for wanting to get as much exposure as possible. But you can assist

advertisers and publications in their decisions regarding what types of editorial policies are acceptable and which are considered unacceptable. Some you may find informational. Others you may feel are the equivalent of a publication selling its "editorial soul."

On the following page, you will find a short survey. This is your chance to comment about these policies and most likely, influence the ways advertisers seek exposure in the various publications within the chiropractic profession.

What do you want to read about? Please fill out the survey and return it to *Dynamic Chiropractic*.

This informal survey may be your only opportunity to affect what is printed for you to read.

AUGUST 1990