

Chiropractic's Emerging Image

HAS A PATIENT EVER TOLD YOU, "YOU LOOK LIKE AN ANGEL?"

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

It was not that long ago. Leroy Perry, D.C. would somehow be named as the Olympic physician for a small country. Then, very quietly, Olympic athletes from almost every other country would sneak up to his room to be treated before the event of their lives.

Eventually, Leonard J. Faye, D.C. was the officially appointed chiropractor for the Canadian Olympic Track and Field Team for the 1984 Summer Olympics. Finally, Jan Corwin, D.C. was named as one of only seven physicians to the 1988 United States Olympic athletes who competed in Seoul, Korea.

The same type of progression has taken place in the public media. Chiropractors have gone from totally unknown, to misunderstood and maligned. But our day is finally arriving.

Consider the five-minute segment during the pre-game show of last years Superbowl. An estimated 90 million viewers discover the San Francisco 49ers "secret weapon": chiropractic care a la Nick Athens, D.C. (There is a follow-up story expected to appear in Sports Illustrated soon.)

Two more surprises have very recently occurred. One of these has probably escaped your notice.

Unless you have children, you are probably unaware of those "awesome" celebrities known as the "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles." By sheer chance, I was sitting with my two sons last Saturday (November 17, 1990) while the "Turtles" cartoon show was on television. One of the bad guys, the evil "Krang," was holding a man hostage at a television station. Every time the hostage tried to get away, Krang would use a special ray gun to throw the man to the ground. Exasperated after his third attempted escape, the man replied, "If this keeps up I'm going to have to go see my chiropractor."

There it was, a simple one sentence lesson that was taught to probably one out of every four children in the United States, and possibly elsewhere:

When you get hurt, go see a chiropractor.

We could not have bought a more powerful endorsement with active children.

The other surprise came in a form that some of your patients will probably see and by which they will probably be affected. There is a new motion picture which has recently been released titled "Jacob's Ladder." In order to be able to extend to you the most unbiased understanding of the impression this movie will make on members of the public, I have not yet personally seen the movie. Instead, Debi Pugliese, our assistant editor saw the film. I then interviewed her the next morning to record her impressions.

In this film, a Vietnam Veteran; Jacob Singer, (played by actor, Tim Robbins) is having problems that stem from his tour of duty. He is having what could be nightmares or are actual encounters with demons. There is only one stable, sane factor in his life: his chiropractor (played by Danny

Aiello, "Moonstruck").

This chiropractor was not just a bit part. Danny Aiello's character was one of the three main characters of the movie (this alone would be very significant). But this chiropractor was the only person who kept stability and caring in the life of this Vet. In the sequence where we first see Jacob visiting his chiropractor, he (Jacob) is lying supine on the adjusting table. He looks up and asks his doctor if anyone has ever told him he looks like an angel. The doctor smiles, nods and tells him, "Yes, you -- every time I see you." Jacobs laughs and tells him, "Well you do. You look like some kind of a smiling cherub up there." This popular film could quite conceivably be, for many viewers, their first-ever exposure to chiropractic.

At one point in the movie, the chiropractor actually rushes into the hospital where Jacob is being taken on a nightmarish journey to the operating room (it appears that fiction does sometimes mirror reality). In this very dramatic scene his chiropractor (Danny Aiello) like an "angel" of mercy, scoops up his tormented patient from his sick-bed, and literally rescues his patient from the horrors of his hospital nightmare. The chiropractor then carries Jacob back to his office to treat and care for him.

While the movie is somewhat violent and frightening, the fear was not generated by the chiropractor. In fact, chiropractic care in this film was the only soothing, healing influence in Jacob's life of pain and torment. Not a bad public impression for chiropractic in the 90's.

For the public to see chiropractic care shown in this light is again an incredible introduction to chiropractic care. (Interestingly enough, during the two scenes in which Jacob receives treatment, actually shown, complete with sound effects, the viewing audience exhibited more anxiety than during the more graphically violent scenes.)

Overall, Ms. Pugliese's impression of chiropractic as it was portrayed in the movie was that "The movie created a very positive depiction. It was very interesting how the creators of the film chose to contrast a very frightening world of medicine against a very rational, sane world of chiropractic."

As the public at large becomes more and more aware of chiropractic, this kind of positive attention will become common. But until that time (and even after it comes to pass), we must all do everything possible to see that the chiropractic profession receives nothing but very positive exposure. We are the creators of the image that the media and the public will ultimately accept and mirror.

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