

# The Future of Chiropractic Looks Dim If Our Papers Continue to Be Written by Chiropractors

Joseph Raboy, DC

I read avidly. I read everything. I read everything in chiropractic about chiropractic when I can understand what's been written. And I always read with apprehension those articles in our chiropractic newspapers, and I must shout to my brethren -- STOP!!! Chiropractors are the most untrained writers who write the most gibberish and garbage that I have ever read; and then they footnote and append; add a reading list, which is supposed to give their articles credence; and then the poor newspaper editor, who can't make sense of the article, hopes someone else can, and publishes it.

And these published articles go nowhere! They ramble! They state nothing!! They have no direction! It is this "direction" that I want to discuss with my fellow writers in this article.

The lack of writing skills in chiropractors is easy to understand. We've been trained in the language of science, not writing, and the number of original writings that we had to write in college was few; and after all, we were supposed to learn how to write in our junior years. What a joke!

The major underlying reason for chiropractors' poor writing skills is that we are called upon to write several styles of writing without having carefully analyzed them in our minds or outlined objectively how to write each particular style. There are basically four styles of chiropractic writing:

*the research article*

*the personal injury*

*the workers' compensation*

the normal notative type for group insurance reports

In subsequent reviews, I'll approach each style in turn.

At this time, I want to discuss the so-called newspaper research article (some call it the research article.) These articles are poorly written because the writers haven't first thought out what they wanted to say nor have they outlined their thoughts in a logical sequence so that they could be understood. This frequently costs them money, as we shall see in later issues.

I want you to try the following when writing your research, articles, or commentaries about anything. Each item is listed and can be followed and developed further. If you need further help, please feel free to contact me and I'll be glad to help.

1. Be sure you know what you want to say before you write it. That's right -- think a few minutes before writing. This process is called "thinking" and cannot be underestimated. I don't mean to be facetious or to poke fun at anyone. Everyone knows how to think, but do we do enough thinking before we start writing? I know that you think that the thinking process is rudimentary, but if you can't "say" it, you can't write it. Can you say it in one sentence? Try. Think to yourself: What is the

who, what, when, where, why, and how of the topic. Use as many of these as you can in the first sentence.

In writing, this first sentence is called the thesis, and it says everything you want to say in the body of your paper and no more. All good writing begins with this thesis. In science writing, it's called the "topic;" in law, it's called the "issue." In English writing, the thesis is used to not only introduce the topic, but to define it, to limit it, to give the entire idea of what you want to say in one sentence or at most, two sentences. It gives form to the body and fullness to the idea you're presenting. And the thesis is to be used as the first sentence of the paper. Until you're experienced, use this first sentence as the opening to your entire idea.

The thesis can be helped by the development of an outline of what you want to say in order to include all the relevant facts about the patient and your commentary. The outline may follow or precede the thesis. They tend to work together, so that at the end of this process, the thesis encompasses all that you want to say in one or two sensible sentences so that the adjustor can read the report and understand everything you want to say, the way you want to be understood.

Thesis writing is a skill. Try it by itself. Choose one patient that you have to write a report about and write one sentence about this patient. Start ... Who, (name); what (what happened to him, what did he do? what about him); when (when did it happen and give a time); where (where did it happen?) and explain where; why (it happened, if possible); and then state how it happened. Remember: (Memorize) Who, what, when, where, why, and how. The second sentence will be the total concept of your commentary as concerns the patient's chiropractic results and future needs.

Yes, it's hard, boring, and trying on one's patience, but once you've mastered this art of writing that first sentence, you'll notice that the body of the essay becomes easier because you've already thought it out by developing the thesis in conjunction with an outline. Keep trying to expand the thesis. Write it again and again. After you're through, the test of the thesis is the ability for it to be understood by your CA. Give it to her and ask her what it says in her words. When she understands it, you can be fairly certain that an adjustor will understand it. Remember, a great trick about thesis writing, as well as narrative reporting, is to keep the language simple so that you can be understood by the adjustor or the reviewer. The only place where you can be as difficult as you wish is in your diagnosis where you can be as obtuse as you wish. (Notice how difficult this last sentence is?)

2. After your thesis is understood by everyone, you can start to develop the idea, and you must stick to the thesis, which is, of course, central to your point. You may then use whatever format you wish in developing your paper.

3. After thinking, developing an outline, and writing a thesis, you must begin the writing in full and complete sentences. We are all wont to write in single, simple words or phrases like in the comic books. This is the material I read in our chiropractic journals and newspapers, or the reverse; such terribly long sentences that they make no sense whatsoever, which then forms the gibberish which I've spoken of so much before. The run-on sentences, sequences of words, and single words put together are atrocious in sight, sense, and logic. One looks foolish after writing a totally incomprehensible sentence, with a footnote following it, as if the footnote is going to save the sentence, much less the sense of the thought. So, my suggestion is to write full and complete sentences! I know that all of us have single word or phrase fill-ins on our exams and narrative reports, but it is the commentary and history that we are so concerned about. This commentary must be correctly punctuated as well.

Grammar is fun and easy if one takes a little time with it. This lack of grammar knowledge is seen

in many papers and points out a lack of writing skills. It's not that our brethren are less intelligent; it is that they are less trained in the basic writing skills necessary to make themselves understood. If I can make writing easier for you, it is my pleasure to help and in some measure clarify thoughts so we can proudly say, "I wrote that article."

NOVEMBER 1990