

The Strife Is Killing Us

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It seems that whichever way I turn these days, I hear negative commentary about the chiropractic profession, and the majority of it seems to be coming from within.

I realize these are difficult economic times, which always drives discontent, but I recently read an article in which a practicing DC complained about the student loan default rate, and concluded that prospective students should not consider chiropractic!

I hear more and more commentary about how to make money in practice by promoting procedures that are not even remotely evidence-based, and at a time when our society's decision-makers are turning more and more strongly toward the concept that we should be able to present evidence for what we offer in the way of health services. People (especially the insurers) want to know that there is substance for something that will cost money.

Many in our profession have turned toward the hucksters - those who would have you believe that they have found the magic answer for what ails humans. It is usually firmly grounded in the belief system of the huckster.

Recently, at a large chiropractic gathering, a non-chiropractic observer (a vendor) was located near a booth wherein the hucksters were promoting a strange form of "chiropractic care." This lady commented that what was going on there was a "freak show!" Now, we might make all kinds of excuses, but the reality is that far too much of what is going on in our profession today falls into that category.

Along with the hucksters at the program were those who were dispensing the rumors, many of which were designed to hurt and/or diminish others. One could hear the pronouncements about which chiropractic institutions were going down the drain and would soon close. There were those who were using virtually every trick in the book to sign up prospective students while denigrating other institutions.

None of these examples of negative behavior improves our circumstances as a profession. I had a study made of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reports from the federal government - reports that every such institution must submit to the government. Across the profession, we are down 43 percent in the number of students in chiropractic degree programs. Who is in a position to knock anyone else here? Instead of pushing the rumors, we should be seeking answers to why there is such a downward spiral in attendance in chiropractic degree programs.

Are our young people concluding that we are a profession filled with such negativity that there is no use in pursuing it? Are we losing credibility with members of society because of the strange positions some among us are taking and promoting with respect to "miracles of chiropractic" for which we have no acceptable evidence?

My son recently experienced some vertigo. After listening to him and realizing that he had gone through rather extensive testing of his middle ear and brain, I suggested that he consult a

cardiologist because he might have an ectopic focus of neurological stimulation. True to his heritage, however, he suggested that he would like to see a chiropractor for care first. I told him that what I had learned from him did not lead me to think this was the answer, but that I would refer him to someone anyway.

I sent him to a DC who asked him to hold a bottle of pills and checked for "muscle weakness." His "tests" revealed that he needed a host of supplements, and that his vertigo was due to allergies. My son asked for another doctor, and I referred him again. This chiropractor said my son had a problem in his upper cervical spine, and as my son described it, "She used a little thing that clicked on my neck, but it did not make any difference." Then he asked me, "Dad, aren't there any chiropractors out there anymore who adjust like you do?"

In the final analysis, what is the moral of the story? We, as members of the chiropractic profession, must get back to caring for our patients in ways that make sense and are grounded in some kind of evidence. We can neither rely on bogus diagnostic procedures nor on therapeutic approaches that are not supported by objectivity. Doing these things causes us to lose credibility in the eyes of the public, which slowly but surely diminishes our profession. The answers will not be found in "goofy" pronouncements about how chiropractic adjustments will cure everything from pimples to baldness, or how we are "better off without subluxations than with them," when we do not have any support for those statements.

We must stop this internal strife and move back into the mainstream, using quantifiable diagnostic procedures and legitimate natural therapeutics, if we are to regain our believability. Let's get on with it before we do even more damage to ourselves.

Oh, by the way: My son has an ectopic focus of neurological stimulation, which, by the time you read this, will hopefully have been corrected through a surgical ablation procedure. Unfortunately, were it not for his personal confidence in chiropractic as a whole, he would have abandoned further use of our professional services as a result of his strange and unorthodox experiences.

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