

Good Thinking Can Come out of Iraq

Louis Sportelli, DC

Not a single hour has gone by since the Iraq War began that one of the hundreds of news agencies, cable programs, or network news shows has not reported on some aspect of the war. Some of these reports are undoubtedly biased to the right or left, while others try to be fair and balanced. But the news organizations rarely report on the many positive things that have resulted since the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The rebuilding of roads, hospitals, infrastructure and communications; the personal freedom enjoyed by millions of Iraq citizens since the downfall of Saddam; and the potential for this small, but strategically positioned country to begin an experiment with democracy - none of this has been the focus of most news stories.

It is no different in chiropractic. We have our own yellow tabloid journalism, continually trying to create chaos, confusion, commotion and upheaval within the thought process of doctors who practice every day. As I travel across this country, it is amazing how many doctors come up to me and say, "I don't believe this article I read in (such and such publication) is correct; could you explain what is going on?" Most know, when they read various articles, which ones are accurate and which are designed to promote conflict; and yet there is always that little doubt that has been planted and needs explanation/clarification.

Well, the purpose of this particular column is not to talk about the negative and disruptive elements within the profession, which are small in number, but larger than all outdoors in self-inflated importance. Here is my message for this column. It is a feeling and concept that will not end when the Iraq War ends.

Recently, I was simply taken aback when I saw a half-page newspaper advertisement about Major Robert Broody, which appeared in the newspaper in his local area. Eighteen doctors of chiropractic, his colleagues and friends in the profession, seized the opportunity to let the community know that Dr. Broody was not only back from Iraq, but back in practice as well. Each of these doctors of chiropractic truly epitomized the terms "colleague and friend," and saw fit to not only say "thank you" to their fellow colleague, but also to let the local area know that he would be serving his patients again.

For the past decade or so, I have witnessed a change in attitude among both young doctors and established practitioners. It is not uncommon to see a young doctor graduate, find a location, and never once visit any of his or her colleagues before making the decision to open an office. When I question some of the young doctors, they tell me it was obvious that when they attempted to contact the local doctors (those who even tried to make contact), they were being greeted as if the Antarctic had suddenly descended on their community. The cold shoulders they received from the established doctors made them feel less than welcome and less than collegial.

What has happened to civility and that old-fashioned "willingness to help" which were ever-present only half a century ago? Did we change as a profession, or has society simply taken another step backward, and we are simply condoning this kind of behavior, and thus by our actions, perpetuating it?

Take a look at the ad about Major Broody and ask yourself: Can something be done with local colleagues to help a young practitioner? Can something be done not only to improve the collective image of chiropractic, but advance the profession as well?

This ad certainly came at a time when it was needed to provide a demonstration of leadership and collective willingness on the part of area doctors of chiropractic to support their own, support their profession, and ultimately, support themselves in the process. Kudos are in order for the doctors who had not only the courage, but also the self-esteem, to step up and be part of an unselfish public chiropractic welcome for a deserving colleague.

If you have been following the chiropractic news as I have, you have undoubtedly read about two issues that are in development and that you can participate in and truly have your input clearly heard and recorded. The first is the program being spearheaded by Kent Greenawalt - the attempt to find a chiropractic message that will resonate with the public. Kent has been working on this project for more than a year and has already achieved a significant accomplishment in getting the support of various groups to combine their resources and promote a common message to the entire consumer public of this great country. This message will not be crafted by the chiropractic profession, but rather from the research and data compiled by the public relations firms on "what the public really wants to hear" and "what will motivate them to seek the services of a doctor of chiropractic." This is so critical in these changing times when complementary, integrative and alternative health care are exploding. Will chiropractic be an afterthought in the minds of the public who utilize the services of chiropractors, or will chiropractic be catapulted from obscurity to prominence by this informational explosion? Only time and group participation of this nature will tell, but it is one of the first times that a major effort of this nature has been tried and perhaps, like the DCs who created the Broody ad, it is time.

The second project to be launched is the "identity survey" which evolved from a project of the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC).^{*} The first meeting of this worldwide group was held at Life Chiropractic College West and resulted in the compilation of a survey that each and every doctor of chiropractic in the world can participate in. Log on to www.WFC.org and click on "identity consultation"; be certain to participate and let your voice and feelings be known about the fragile, confused and often-maligned identity of the wonderful profession we practice each and every day.

There is no doubt that the public is confused about who we are and what we do, but it is no more or less confusing than the fact that new graduates are not comfortable introducing themselves to established doctors in their own community. It is also not surprising when established doctors view other colleagues as competitors, rather than colleagues. Think about how much we can do collectively; maybe the "Freeing of Iraq" will also help "Free Our Thinking" about the future of collective participation. Maybe, just maybe, we can create a paradigm shift in our thinking, from competitor to colleague, from isolation to integration, and from personal need to professional advancement. Kudos to the doctors who supported the Broody ad, and to all those who will take the bold step toward similar actions.

**Editor's note:* For more information, see "Worldwide Survey of Chiropractors on Identity" on the front page of this issue.

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