

How Unity Can Help You

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Maybe you have just started out in your practice and are struggling with problems such as leasing office space, buying equipment and finding new patients. Maybe you have maintained a successful practice for years, and are busy dealing with insurance companies, managing your staff and the demands of caring for many patients. Either way, chiropractic unity may seem like a small problem compared to the day-to-day stresses of being a chiropractor. You may be thinking, "What can chiropractic unity do for me?"

Chiropractic unity is not a minor concern that can be kept on the back burner. It is essential if the chiropractic profession is going to have a bright and healthy future. Whether you just started practicing yesterday or have been in practice for 20 years, chiropractic unity can benefit your practice. The future of the profession is in the hands of every chiropractor. Election Day is coming up in November, and every American should exercise their right to vote. Just as every vote counts in an election, every doctor counts to the unity campaign.

We can no longer afford the luxury of pretending that we are growing and thriving. Only one out of 10 Americans is a chiropractic patient. In 1996, there were 15,400 new enrollments at chiropractic colleges. In 2002, there were approximately 10,058. This is a change of 5,342 students, a decline of 34 percent in just six years. It is not unusual for chiropractic to receive bad coverage in the media, which means that we constantly have to defend what we do and correct inaccurate reporting. Chiropractic unity is essential if we want these dim statistics to improve. Our lack of unity has lowered the number of patients you help, reduced your income, and damaged the public image of chiropractic. Every time we send out divided messages or battle each other in public, we take away the potential for getting the most out of any pro-chiropractic effort. Our lack of unity is like a professional subluxation that has been left untreated. The longer we take to solve the problem; the more damage will be done to the profession.

Of the 60,000 chiropractors in America, only 15 percent (9,000) are members of a state or national chiropractic organization. That means 85 percent are not actively involved in any national professional advocacy for our profession. That's 51,000 who have the potential for adding their support to chiropractic's future and well-being, but are not doing so. We vote in national, state and local elections because we want our opinions to be heard. So, why are we letting our voices go unheard and uncounted when it comes to our profession? It is time for us to join together, support the unity campaign, and show how much we care about chiropractic.

The goal of the unity campaign may seem simple, but it is crucial to the future of the profession. The key goal of the unity campaign is getting more patients into chiropractors' offices. How you practice does not matter to the unity campaign. Whether you are a straight or a mixer, every chiropractor wants to help the greatest number of patients possible, and have a successful practice.

Helping the profession by helping individual chiropractors is the ultimate goal of the unity campaign. The campaign seeks to promote the benefits of chiropractic, educate the public, and gain respect for the profession, all of which should help bring more patients to your door. A small

change could make a big difference for the future of chiropractic. If we saw 12 people out of 100, our profession would grow by 20 percent.

One of the biggest challenges of the unity campaign is to help level the playing field in the media. Our profession has suffered through years of inaccurate, biased reporting, which has created huge misconceptions about chiropractic in the general public. Not only do many people not know the benefits of chiropractic, some are suspicious of it, or actually believe it is dangerous. A recent analysis released by the health care quality company, HealthGrades, found that up to 195,000 Americans die in hospitals each year due to potentially preventable medical errors.¹⁻³ Compared to medical care, chiropractic care is a great deal safer because it is natural, drugless and noninvasive. Yet much of the general public believes that they should be skeptical about chiropractic. The public deserves to know how safe and effective chiropractic care is. This is what the unity campaign aims to accomplish. The public should know that chiropractic is relatively inexpensive, can relieve pain, and charter a course to lifetime wellness. The unity campaign wants to bring you patients who are better informed and less skeptical.

We want to make chiropractic an essential part of American health care. When John Lennon wrote "Imagine," he had a vision of a world where people came together for the greater good. Imagine a better, brighter future for chiropractic. Imagine if your patients saw you for regularly scheduled check-ups for their postural health, the way they do with their dentists. Imagine if everyone knew that you were the first person to see for health problems, not the last. Imagine if the media sang the praises of chiropractic. Imagine chiropractic getting the respect it deserves from the other branches of health care. Imagine the war chest we could have if everyone gave \$100 a month. Imagine if we did it all together. We believe that such a future is possible, but we need the help and support of each and every chiropractor to achieve it.

What can you do? First and foremost, respect your fellow chiropractors as your colleagues. If someone has graduated from a chiropractic college and passed the appropriate state and licensure examinations, then he or she is a chiropractor and you should be on the same side. Let the state laws and governing boards worry about whether other chiropractors are practicing correctly or not. No one cares more about the future of chiropractic than your fellow chiropractors. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "We must all hang together, or assuredly, we shall all hang separately." Soon you will receive more details about how you can help the unity campaign.

The success or failure of the unity campaign depends on individual chiropractors. We have a choice to make: Do we allow chiropractic to slide, or do we make an effort so that chiropractic will grow and thrive? The unity campaign is going to be big and when called upon, I'll need your help. A new era for chiropractic will begin in 2005. We are passionate and inspired about what we do and what this profession has to offer the world. When called upon to support chiropractic, will you help? You and I both know that chiropractic care can change lives. Will you help us take the steps to ensure that everyone else in America knows, too? The future of the profession is in your hands. We will make this work!

References

1. *Patient Safety in American Hospitals*. HealthGrades Quality Study, July 2004.
2. In-hospital deaths from medical errors at 195,000 per year, HealthGrades study finds. HealthGrades press release, July 27, 2004.
3. Study: Hospital errors cause 195,000 deaths. Reuters, July 28, 2004.

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