

Let's Not Kid Ourselves...

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It's safe to say that the vast majority of chiropractors not only teach a wellness lifestyle, but also live it. Most of us look toward more conservative forms of care and tend to shun the use of drugs or surgery in our lives. And while we have been told (and have even told ourselves) that the American public is moving toward a more natural, wellness-oriented lifestyle, the most recent evidence suggests that the trend is confounded on a number of levels.

Yes, it is true that more people are seeking care from so-called "alternative" care providers, which includes doctors of chiropractic. But that doesn't necessarily mean they are forsaking the medical model.

Chiropractic has become the health-conscious entrée on the health care buffet that most people only add to their plate when they have back pain. We have failed to convince the public that a wellness lifestyle is the way to health.

Please consider the following from a recent report on how consumers view prescription drugs and the pharmaceutical companies that sell them:¹

1. 50% of U.S. adults are taking at least one prescription drug. An earlier study showed that 31% of U.S. adults are taking one to three prescription medications and an incredible 17% of U.S. adults are taking four or more prescription drugs.
2. 78% of U.S. adults believe that prescription drugs have had a "positive impact" on the health and quality of life of Americans. Only 13% state that the impact has been negative.
3. 91% say that drug companies make a "very" or "somewhat" important contribution by researching new drugs, while at the same time, 70% believe that drug companies "put profits ahead of people."
4. 69% think that the "high profits made by drug companies" is a "very important" factor in causing higher health care costs. This was considered a greater factor than: greed and waste in the health care system, an aging population, malpractice lawsuits, and other factors.
5. 81% believe that prescription and over-the-counter drug costs are "not really justified because companies charge more than necessary."
6. 90% of U.S. adults remember seeing or hearing an advertisement for prescription drugs. This is up from 76% reporting the same in 2000.
7. 23% say they have seen drug ads and talked to their medical doctor about a specific prescription medication as a result of such advertisements.

All of this leads to some obvious conclusions:

- The public knows that drug companies put profits over people (70%), and that they are being taken advantage of (81%).
- Most of the public sees the advertisements (90%), talks to their doctor (23%) about the drugs, and get at least one prescription (50%), with some people getting four or more prescriptions (17%).

What all this should be teaching us is simple: Find out what the public wants/needs, get your message out as much as you can, and watch the response come pouring in.

This works for the drug companies, even though most of the public thinks they are only in it for the money!

Chiropractic has a much better message to tell. We always have. What we haven't had is the willingness to hear what the public needs/wants, and the willingness to tailor our message accordingly. We also haven't been willing to make the investment to get our message out on a consistent basis.

That's why this publication is wholeheartedly supporting the Campaign for Chiropractic: because this is the first real opportunity I am aware of for chiropractic in the United States to have a well-designed, consistent message - a message that will be sensitive to the needs of the consumer while telling our story.

Beginning in the next few issues, we will have a column for the Campaign for Chiropractic starting on page 4. From then on, you will get periodic updates on the progress of the campaign. (An article on the current status of the campaign appeared on the front page of the June 4, 2005 issue. Please read "Campaign for Chiropractic Gaining Momentum.")

You will be given multiple opportunities to participate in your community. We're asking everyone - vendors and DCs - to make a five-year commitment. This is not about running a few ads; this is a marketing and public relations campaign. We don't have billions of dollars, but if thousands of DCs get involved, we will see big results in communities across the United States.

Look for more details in upcoming issues.

Reference

1. Views on prescription drugs and the pharmaceutical industry. *Kaiser Health Poll Report*, January/February 2005. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation: www.kff.org.

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