

We Get Letters & E-Mail

The Battle for the Soul of Chiropractic - Have We Become a Cult?

During my 23 years in practice, I have frequently heard calls for "Unity!" The rallying cry of "Can't we all just get along?" has been frequent, and in the general context of being accepting of our fellow chiropractors with varying techniques and philosophies, I would certainly join my voice. However, I feel "unity" is also a dangerous threat to the profession, if we allow ourselves to be fooled into thinking that inclusion for the sake of tranquility is worth the long-term cost. What exactly are we uniting with? If we embrace the viper to our breast, we may find that the current declining trend in chiropractic could ultimately prove fatal.

Anyone paying attention in our profession knows that we have a very dark and sinister wing of chiropractic. It is composed of cultists who have primarily used chiropractic as a means to their financial goals. They currently present themselves as "purists" who eschew diagnosis, perform two-minute, patient-mill adjustments, and love huge mega-practices of 100-plus patients per day. They often cloak themselves as being "subluxation-based" chiropractors who shrink back as if slapped at words like "evidence," "science," "diagnosis," "guidelines," etc. They may entice us with the idea that we too can do less work for more money, if we just learn their "secrets"... which they will impart to us, if we just impart our money to them. These are what I call "entrepreneurial chiropractors."

Chiropractic is not their profession. Rather, it is their tool. It is their means to an end, just like some charlatan televangelists use religion as the means to their end. These "principled chiropractors" (an oxymoron, if ever I've heard one) often scream the loudest about "unity." But their definition of "unity" does not mean to unify - it means to "legitimize."

They want their "principle-based" chiropractic to become "mainstream," rather than what it really is: anti-diagnostic, cultist, high-volume practice. They hijack the term "subluxation-based" to pretend that they are purists who are saving the art and philosophy of B.J. and D.D. They pretend that they alone base their care on spinal subluxation. Actually, so do "evidence-based" DCs, but the latter also believe that subluxations usually relate to symptoms and should correlate with physiology, and objective evidence of clinical need.

Chiropractors chanting this "money-hum" will never get it because to them, "subluxation" is a catch term which really is akin to mysticism. They are like faith healers who peer earnestly into the TV camera and describe invisible ill people being instantly healed, as they describe in intimate detail a whole host of symptoms which they allege God is healing, even as they speak. The beauty is, no one can say the TV evangelists are not doing what they claim, because it remains impossible to confirm - since only they can "see" these poor unfortunates, touched by God through the medium of cable channel 24. So too, our "principled" brethren don't diagnose, don't require symptoms, don't expect measurable results, don't waste time with clinical findings, don't demand that care correlate to anything at all. And why then would they have an incentive to pronounce you healthy (unless your money runs out)?

The omniscient DC is thusly empowered as the only authority to "validate" your health. The patient

has no say in the matter. So what if he or she feels fine? So what if there are no complaints? That's just the "silent killer" of subluxation lying dormant until it strikes you down. Heck, with a good dose of salesmanship and the mandatory "patient education" lecture on Wednesday night, you can convince the patients that their head colds, their hangnails, their warts, their lowered libido ... even their navel lint is all due to these hidden subluxations.

These cultists mix a little truth with a lot of error. Yes, subluxations are real, and yes, sometimes symptoms don't tell the full story. And yes, some supportive care is excellent for preventing future problems. But they use these truths as a cloak to cover their greed and avarice. They don't give a damn for unity, unless unity brings "inclusion" of their false doctrine.

That's the problem. How do you unite with the very thing which, once accepted, will hollow out and de-legitimize the entire profession? If the evidence-based chiropractors in the profession unite with our cultic-based brethren, doesn't that suggest that we can't tell the difference ourselves? Otherwise said (meant allegorically and not literally) - if you unite a juicy steak with a pile of dog manure - you don't elevate the manure! You just make the steak inedible. And it only takes a little manure to do the job!

Why do we dance to this illegitimate and soulless tune? Why are so many of our seminars based on making better money, rather than making better doctors? Why don't our colleges emphasize ethics at least as much as philosophy? Why do we wink and nod at bogus "subluxation stations," sEMG, and other fake tools that dupe a trusting public? Why do we legitimize questionable techniques without requiring proof of effectiveness? Why do we fight every effort to create practice guidelines? Why do we stay silent at bogus research scams, like the current RCS program from Terry Rondberg, without raising a deafening protest? Why don't our state boards get tough with DCs who routinely overutilize? Why is there so little outrage that chiropractic is too-often hijacked by the worst elements and most blatant charlatans among us?

The umbrella of chiropractic should be very broad. I have no problem with uniting straights and mixers, or one technique with another, or National and Palmer, etc. But we must never accept the unethical with the ethical. The price of that kind of unity we cannot afford to pay! We must never accept the charlatan with the scholar. There is a difference. I'm not convinced that we know the difference anymore. To pretend there is no distinction is like claiming that a comic book and a classic novel are just as good - after all, they both have words, and they're both published on paper. Could not the comic book even claim it is superior because it also has pictures and takes less effort to read?

Still, there is a world of difference. One will never be "literature," no matter how hard you pretend it is. In my opinion, unity - at the cost of legitimizing the cultists among us - will compound our problems and further risk our collective future.

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