

A Public Apology

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The more time you spend in this profession, the more you recognize the importance of working together. In almost 20 years of serving chiropractic, I have come to discover that, sooner or later, an issue will arise upon which we can't agree. When that happens, we must come to a conclusion and then make a conscious decision to work together for the profession we all love.

The past few months have included a sharp focus on the struggles surrounding the actions and governance of the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE). This is not the first time this publication has reported on these issues. During that time, I have pointedly and passionately presented my own observations about this situation. I have unashamedly recommended numerous changes for the NBCE based upon its history and the results of my investigations. Unfortunately, in the course of reporting the actions taken by the NBCE leadership, it has proven difficult to separate the deeds from the doers.

Let me be very clear about what I believe the issues to be:

- **Financial and Organizational Transparency:** As a nonprofit corporation whose revenue comes almost completely from chiropractic students, the NBCE should be willing to provide any financial or organizational information to anyone, particularly as it relates to the appropriate use of the students' money. The NBCE board should be open and responsive to any concern regarding the appropriateness of any expenditure.
- **State Delegate Authority and Voice:** The NBCE state delegates should have an appropriate voice in the governance of the NBCE. They should have access to all financial information, be able to elect all board members, and be able to propose and pass amendments to the bylaws. The state delegates currently do not enjoy these rights.
- **Respect for the Value of Student Dollars:** The lives of our chiropractic students are hard enough. Most begin practice with more debt than it takes to buy a home. Our chiropractic students should not be charged any more than is absolutely necessary for their Parts I, II, III and IV exams. The NBCE currently has over \$16 million in assets (almost twice its annual service income), more than \$11 million of which is in cash or short-term investments. This is certainly a large enough financial "cushion" for a nonprofit that controls the chiropractic students' ability to be licensed and can charge whatever it chooses for its tests. There was no reason to charge the students \$1.6 million extra last year, except to increase the NBCE bank account. Individual students should have paid at least \$500 less for all four NBCE tests in 2005.

Even more importantly, let me reiterate what the issues are not:

- The quality of the NBCE exams has never been in question. They are of the highest quality.
- The NBCE staff and volunteers have never been the issue, either. These incredibly dedicated men and women work very hard to serve our profession.
- The commitment and dedication of the NBCE board members themselves has not been an issue. Just because I disagree with how the NBCE is run, doesn't mean I don't have the utmost respect for the tremendous sacrifice and commitment of the board members. I certainly do.

But in the course of the debate of the issues, it has become clear to me that at least some have taken my comments (both in print and speech) personally. This was never my intention.

To those I have personally offended, I humbly and sincerely make this public apology. It was never my intention to impugn the character or integrity of any board member, staff member or anyone else.

We each have a responsibility to enter each debate with passion and professionalism. But after the issues have been debated, the decisions made and the votes counted, we must forgive each other's trespasses and move forward in unity. We must do so for the good of chiropractic and that of our own mortal souls. We must put the past behind us and recommit ourselves to working together for the common good of our profession.

Life is too short and our profession is too small to do otherwise.

DMP Jr.

JUNE 2006