

You Heard It Here First: Sleep Wellness

James Edwards, DC

"Doctor, what type of mattress do you recommend?" Surely this is one of the most often asked questions posed by your patients over the years. If your office is anything like our office *used* to be, you usually recommend they look for a moderately firm, non-pillowtop mattress that comes with a free-trial period. From there, the patient heads off to shop unprepared for the mattress store "wolves" who lie in wait.

After hearing that question for several decades - and being unwilling to accept the word of chiropractic associations that endorse mattresses in order to receive money - our office decided it was time to research and test the many types of mattresses so we could provide our patients solid information upon which they could rely. After researching and booking hotel rooms where we could sleep on every mattress known to man (innerspring, foam, air, water and gel), we discovered what we consider to be the best bed ever. In fact, it is the mattress I ultimately purchased and now sleep on.

Having had two lumbar disc surgeries and needing a [CPAP for sleep apnea](#), I am a tough sell when it comes to sleep products. But I must confess that I have never, ever slept better. I am literally amazed that when I fall asleep in a particular position (back or side and barring a bathroom trip), I awake in the morning in the exact same position. I find that astounding, and it occurs night after night after night. More importantly, I feel completely rested and have no pain or stiffness when I awake.

We were so impressed with this state-of-the-art mattress that we decided to place one on display in our new office so our patients could evaluate it in the privacy of a doctor's office, without any pressure from a salesperson. This begs the question: Is it ethical for a doctor of chiropractic to sell a mattress from their office and make a profit? In my opinion and without question, the answer is yes.

If you do a little research, you will find that the [American Medical Association](#) has a policy against selling health care products from a physician's office. However, if the chiropractic profession were to adopt that standard, most DCs would have to throw out their nutritional supplements, orthotics, heel lifts, supports, collars, pillows, etc. It is also important to mention that many companies who have supported this profession for decades would instantly go out of business.

Barring a state law, rule or regulation to the contrary, dispensing or selling health-related products from a chiropractic office is a common and yes, accepted part of a chiropractic practice, regardless of what the AMA thinks! Having dispensed with the ethics issue, there are three much bigger issues that need to be discussed about mattresses and sleep wellness.

First, patients rely on their doctor to give them good advice when they ask questions about mattresses (and all manner of other things). If you have not performed proper due diligence in regard to sleep wellness and cannot tell your patients about the pros and cons of different sleep systems, then you are letting your patients down. It's that simple.

Second, a restful night's sleep is absolutely essential for human beings; when it does not occur, a multitude of health problems can result. You need to be aware of that and so do your patients. That's why all the doctors in our office have become certified in sleep wellness, and why you should, too.

Third, let's discuss the economics of dispensing (selling) a mattress to your patients and making a profit on your patient's purchase. In this day and age of managed care and with many chiropractic offices being crippled in the process, why not become a trusted resource on sleep wellness and earn a fee for your expertise, if indeed the patient decides to purchase the product you display and recommend?

After researching mattress types over the past few months, I am convinced that sleep wellness is very important health issue and is a natural for doctors of chiropractic to rightfully claim. Why? Because with the proper training, no other health care discipline can be a better resource on this important subject.

AUGUST 2009