

We Get Letters & E-Mail

Our Problem Is the Product, Not the Buyer or Seller

Dear Editor:

I can explain to you the problem of increasingly low enrollments in chiropractic education, and I can do it for a lot less than the \$100,000 dollars Foot Levelers and Standard Process have paid to the Widmeyer Group to figure this out. I'll take *half* as much. [Read "[Growing the Future: The Chiropractic Education Foundation](#)" in the June 3 issue for background.]

Our free market is simply functioning as it is meant to. Re-read Greg Stanley's prescient article in DC, "The Sustainability of Chiropractic," published in the [Sept. 10, 2007 issue](#), and you'll realize that Mr. Stanley was spot on. We are still at 7 percent (or less; I've heard as low as 4 percent) utilization across the population, a ceiling we have been unable to raise for decades. Students (many with questionable skills in either chiropractic care or business) are graduating with \$200,000 in loan debt or more (I have personally seen students leave with close to \$500,000 in debt) and are going into a primarily entrepreneurial profession that still struggles with even the most basic task of creating a unified, clear definition of what it is, what it does, how it works and who should use our services.

If I remember correctly, a study showed that 50 percent of newly licensed grads in California let their license lapse within five years. Simple math regarding the massive investment versus likely return explains why fewer and fewer students are choosing chiropractic college.

In addition, in the approximately 30 continuing education seminars I teach each year, I hear over and over from chiropractors many years in practice that they would not and do not recommend chiropractic as a career to their children, patients or friends. Why? Reimbursement, struggle, professional divisiveness, frustration ... again, that return-on-investment issue.

The Chiropractic Education Foundation's goals and purpose are ill-founded. The need is not an assessment of "today's student population, the extent of chiropractic's student prospect pool" and "concrete information to advance the marketing plan." The statement from Gary Cuneo that "we all need to do a better job of selling a chiropractic career to a community of potential students" is appalling to me. We need a far better product to sell.

Until this profession unifies, until we present a clear identity that resonates with the public, until we abandon our ridiculous infighting over language and concepts that were initially formulated purely as pragmatic legal maneuvers, until we expand our utilization rate to, let's say, 25 percent, until a chiropractic student can graduate with a better than 50 percent chance of making a good living, until we raise our admissions standards and require a pre-admission exam similar to an MCAT and stop taking any and all students who can qualify for a loan, and until we've solved or made significant progress on the foundational problems of this profession, we have no business doing a "better job of selling" a chiropractic career to students.

If the free market feels we do not have a viable, attractive, valuable product in chiropractic education leading to a chiropractic career, the market will allow us to contract to a sustainable

level or become extinct. Our problem is not the buyer or the seller; the problem is the product. Spend your time and money fixing the product and that product will help sell itself.

I'll send you an invoice for my \$50,000 consulting fee.

Mitch Carter, DC
West Hills, Calif.

JULY 2011