

## We Get Letters & E-Mail

Why Do Chiropractors Eat Their Young?

Dear Editor:

Let me paint a picture for you: You're a new graduate from chiropractic school. With diploma in hand, you step into the world a *doctor* and nothing in the known universe is going to rain on your parade. You have the knowledge, the skills and the spunk to take on any practice, patient or presentation. You will not and cannot be swayed in your undying love for chiropractic.

Until your first contract negotiations begin and you realize you are a peon, a pip-squeak, a pimple who knows nothing and is not worth more than \$28,000 a year. You spent four years studying and working your tuckus off, only to be awarded a fat slap in the face and a 70-hour work week.

Ugly, isn't it? This is the reality for too many of my young colleagues. The truth of the matter is that chiropractors eat their young. Senior practitioners are looking to find cheap labor in the form of a [new graduate](#). Advantages? Young, energetic, impressionable. Young doctors are so easily tantalized by the opportunity to advance that they seldom look at the fine print in a contract or crunch the numbers themselves.

A perfect example is the first contract I was offered. I'll give you the gist: modest base salary of \$26,800 per year and a graduated percentage after x collections. No health benefits, no continuing education and no help with taxes. Not the best situation, but the percentage was just enough to bait and hook any ambitious new graduate. OK. The fine print: the graduated percentages were at such great leaps in collections that it would be hardly worth it for me to work. Basically, I would work harder and harder and be compensated less and less, even though my percentage was increasing. This type of practice allows the senior doctor to sit back and watch me do all the marketing for them while cashing checks and working 20-hour weeks.

Now, I fully understand that sole proprietors have done their fair share of hard work to get to the point that they need to hire an associate. I also understand that an associateship is an opportunity to learn and a certain learning curve is to be expected. My only request to docs who are hiring associates is to have respect for our profession. We are young and without experience, but we are still doctors.

Paying [associates](#) a salary they could easily make at Starbucks serving lattes is degrading. The right associate will work a 70-hour work week without complaint if they know they're being fairly compensated. Unfortunately, with \$150,000 in student loan debt, it's not enough to just promise a good learning experience any more.

Now that I'm safely at home at Belville Fletcher Chiropractic, wielding a contract I can be proud of, I feel it is my responsibility to share with others this growing trend among chiropractors. Be a mentor to a young graduate and guide them through hardships you experienced, instead of throwing us into an exam room and saying, "Stay." You may just find that a new graduate can teach you things as well.

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