

We Get Letters & E-Mail

Demonstrating Why We Need to Expand Our Education and Scope

Dear Editor:

I have to ask the question: What was the point of Donald Petersen's [editorial](#) ["Drugs and Corruption: Chronically Linked," June 3 *DC*] regarding corruption and the pharmaceutical industry? It might better have been titled "Industry and Corruption," as the poor ethics of "Big Business" are by no means limited to "Big Pharma"

How about the recent findings regarding fake Chinese parts making their way into United States military equipment; was there not bribery, cheating and personal gain for U.S. companies involved? And have we shut down production or refused to use any electronic parts in our equipment? Of course not.

How about the Wall Street debacle? Did we stop investing and refuse to put our money in the banks because some individuals felt they were above the law and common morality? Again, no. Has oil companies' drilling and spilling resulted in widespread use of alternative fuels and decreased the popularity of petroleum products? Say it with me now...

That drug companies want as many patients as possible to "take as many drugs as possible regardless of age or the availability of more effective alternatives" is a given. The goal of each company is to get as many patients as possible to take its product or therapeutic intervention, regardless of the availability of better solutions via their competitors; or indeed in place of a natural alternative. Our culture of profit at any price has encouraged this behavior on the part of drug companies despite patient needs. It has encouraged this behavior on the part of financial institutions despite the potential ruin of so many people. It has encouraged this behavior on the part of U.S. military subcontractors despite the potential danger to our troops. It is pervasive in the business world and certainly not limited to one segment.

So, I guess the point of the editorial is to let chiropractors know what bad guys the [pharmaceutical](#) companies are and to discourage the idea of scope expansion, because gosh, why would we want to align ourselves with a group like that? In my mind, it only shows that chiropractors are key to ethical practice in this country; we are not going to abandon our roots in manipulation and natural interventions, and we can help patients to make better decisions regarding their care.

We can only do this if we have the ability to use the best of pharmaceutical intervention where appropriate; advise against the use of drugs where appropriate; and continue our long tradition of putting patient welfare at the forefront of each practice. We can only do this with expanded education and scope.

Cathlynn Groh, DC
Denver, Colo.

Dear Editor:

Wow! Who would have thought the pharmaceutical industry was so corrupt that it would actually resort to bribery? Really? C'mon; it's not like the pharmaceutical industry had to bribe public officials to protect it from legal responsibility for the damage its products cause. I mean, the FDA approves most everything the industry makes, so how dangerous could it really be? Not only this, but Congress is looking after the American public in a big way – it *never* accepts bribes or passes legislation that protects Big Pharma from prosecution or lawsuits. And only a few people actually die from drug reactions every year; 60,000 people isn't that many, right?

Then again, that is from a single drug ... hmm. Of course, [vaccines](#) are safe – they have to be, since the government encourages vaccinations. It wouldn't do anything that would hurt us. Nahhh, not our government, the Boy Scouts of the free world, the steely-eyed defenders of the innocent; the purveyors of truth, justice and the American Dream.

The world is waking up to this vile industry's death grip on our leaders. Tolerance for this sort of behavior is fading fast. It is only a matter of time before chiropractors and other nonmedical health professions are forced to step up. We have been suppressed and subdued for so long collectively that we are not confident in our ability to lead the world back to better health.

We are shying away from our destiny. We have to grab that ring and hold it high. When we do, there will be the backlash, of course; any sudden changing of the guard always makes waves. Those who have been in charge for so long are losing their sugar daddy, and soon will be fighting to save themselves from the same fate they once had planned for the chiropractor. Guess what? It's about time!

Richard Bend, DC
Monterey, Calif.

Doctor, You Are Worth More

Dear Editor:

This is a response to the "Time to Clean up Our Profession" letter to the editor [Steven Livingston, DC, [June 17 issue](#)]. I have a solution for this doctor. Instead of blaming others (i.e., DCs who use practice-management companies) for *his* shortcomings, he should go ahead and go out of network; do not accept assignment and go non-par with Medicare. That way, no one can tell him how to practice (obviously he needs to stay within his scope of practice and do so ethically). If his practice is built on "honesty" and "integrity," he should have no problem making a good living doing just that.

Third-party payers will continue to do everything in their power to eliminate or withhold payment for *any* service provided by chiropractors and for that matter, any other health care provider (regardless of discipline). They do this for one simple reason: they are in the business of making money. Obviously they will try to look for any excuse not to pay.

I'm not sure why Dr. Livingston assumes doctors who utilize practice-management companies are the sole cause of insurance denying claims. In fact, the group I am with encourages all doctors to *get out*! All practice-management companies are not created equally. I agree there is some garbage out there, as there is with any profession.

By implementing the principles I have learned, I have been able to transform lives utilizing the gift

of chiropractic. If my company has taught me anything, it is to expand my concepts as to what it is I have to offer my patients. I do not use "high-pressured sales to sell long-term, expensive treatment plans." I recommend the best, give the best and expect the best. The amount I charge is absolutely minute compared to the tens of thousands most of my patients have already spent (insurance or not), and still have health problems. I have done this using an all-cash practice where patients stay, pay and refer.

There is nothing wrong with having a coach / management company to help you run your practice. In fact, I would not be in practice if it weren't for my company helping me. My recommendations are what each individual patient needs, not what their third-party-payer system does or does not cover.

Instead of worrying what others are doing, I encourage Dr. Livingston and others to focus on improving their own practices to the point that they don't have to rely on third-party reimbursement. You are worth more than you know, doctor!

Matthew Christenson, DC
Abilene, Texas

The Road Not Taken Has Indeed Made All the Difference

Dear Editor:

I recently had the opportunity to take a fellow doctor out to lunch to get to know him and learn how we could effectively refer patients to one another. This doctor happened to be a doctor of osteopathy. During lunch, this osteopath continued to remind me that not only could he function as a primary care physician, but that he could also utilize spinal manipulation and did so every once in awhile (even though I have heard from DOs that only 5 percent now use manipulation).

It was implied that he was a "real" doctor and superior to any chiropractor. He was cordial, but there was an indelible message that he was a true physician and that osteopaths had gotten their act together where chiropractors could not. I explained that it wasn't that chiropractic couldn't get its act together, but that a debate has raged about this very topic for a number of years among chiropractors.

Conservative chiropractors want nothing to do with Big Pharma and the sickness care that is promoted within the hospital system, while more liberal chiropractors want to utilize pharmaceuticals as just another tool in their tool box. To be very honest, I think both sides have a valid argument, so I have not come to a solid conclusion of the subject.

The egocentric side of me wanted to tell the DO he was no better than me and that in fact, his profession had sold out its core philosophy to make a buck and gain notoriety. But the fact of the matter is that DOs recognize the healing power of spinal manipulation and when it comes to primary care, not only do I and my family see one, but I also recommend them for the primary and specialized care of my patients.

After my lunch meeting, I returned home feeling irritated and belittled, so I did what I always do in such situations: I called my father, who is also a chiropractor. I was actually a bit mad at him for not recommending DO school when I was making the decision of which school to attend. He should have known better. Didn't he know how little respect we get and how insurance reimbursement can't compare to that of MDs? Why didn't he direct me (and my brother, who is also a chiropractor) to go the more traditional route?

My dad quickly snapped me out of it by saying, "Why would you want to be part of the system that addicts people to legal drugs and imprisons them in bad health? I thank God every day that I don't write prescriptions." He went on to say, "You have chiropractic, acupuncture, and nutrition; you can treat everyone and never harm a soul."

The more I reflected on this, the more I realized how right he was. *JAMA* reported in 1994 that more than 350,000 people per year die from medicine, making it the third-leading cause of death behind heart disease and cancer. The journal also revealed in 1990 that doctors were given \$13,000 per year, on average, in gifts and enticements from the different drug companies trying to convince them to sell their drugs. That is a lot of money spent on getting into doctors' heads.

The U.S. makes up 5 percent of the world's population and uses 75 percent of the world's pharmaceuticals, and yet we are one of the sickest nations in the world. According to the World Health Organization, we are in the bottom five of all nations surveyed. This is despite the fact that we have the [least amount of smoking](#) in the world and one of the highest qualities of life.

I am not knocking traditional chiropractors, but there is a time and place for pharmaceuticals. I also know that while chiropractic has its fair share of scam artists and con men, there is a reason mainstream medicine is breaking this nation and at the forefront of the political debates.

I have two and soon to be three little boys of my own. I can tell you that chiropractic and osteopathy are both good, honorable professions, but I would be lying if I said I wouldn't be disappointed if they went the more traditional route (osteopathy) simply for compensation or to be accepted by all. That may be very bad news for me, as not only am I looking more and more like my father, but I find myself acting and thinking like him, too.

But as for me, in the end, I love my profession and the patients who trust me with their health. People come to me suffering every day, tired of being told to take some painkillers and muscle relaxers and "wait it out." Usually they come to me in intense pain and on several medications, and leave feeling pain free and rejuvenated. I am able to do this without having them pick up a script with harmful side effects; I do it with my hands and God-given ability. Every day, I can teach patients how to prevent disease and illness through proper diet, supplementation, exercise, and regular alignments. I am in the business of wellness, not sickness, and for that I am truly grateful.

Ryan Hatch, DC
Parker, Colo.

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