

Every Patient Is an Advocate ... or a Critic

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"I've been going to a chiropractor since December 1993. I go as long as I can between appointments (sometimes one week, sometimes four weeks), but usually walk in to his office in major, almost unbearable pain. I always get immediate relief, but might be in pain for a short time from the adjustments."

The above is a comment made by a 44-year-old female patient who has taken the time to create an account on PatientsLikeMe.com, one of several Web sites that has developed online communities of patients who share their stories about their conditions and the treatments they choose. This particular patient is suffering from fibromyalgia. She gave chiropractic high marks (4 out of 4) for "Pain Effectiveness," "Headaches Effectiveness" and "Pain in Lower Back Effectiveness." She gave chiropractic a 3 out of 4 for "Pain in Upper Back Effectiveness," "Pain in Shoulders Effectiveness" and "Neck Pain Effectiveness." Chiropractic appropriately scored very low (only 1 out of 4) on side effects.

Overall, this was a great review for other patients looking for information that will help them decide if chiropractic is a good choice for their particular ailment. Thus far, 432 members of this Web site have tried and rated chiropractic. Chiropractic has been rated effective for pain, fibromyalgia, general health, pain in the lower back, headaches and stiffness / spasticity.

Another patient who provided a comment on the site made this remark: "I was scared at first to have adjustments done, especially in the neck region. But my chiropractor is great; she made me feel really comfortable. We did some adjustments and the results were immediate. I walked out with a bounce in my step and had not felt that good in a very long time."

Needless to say, these types of comments are very encouraging to the growing population of consumers who are taking the time to do their homework about chiropractic. Sadly, however, not all of the comments are this positive.

Web sites such as PatientsLikeMe.com, CureTogether.com and others will continue to grow in popularity. Combined with your scores on Yelp, Google Reviews and other online rating services, these serve as the criteria for thousands of decisions each month. People you may never see or talk to are deciding if they want to try chiropractic or whether they will visit your office based upon what they are reading online. And with chiropractic featured on "[Dr. Phil](#),"¹ "The Dr. Oz Show" and "[The Doctors](#)"² earlier this year and in not one, but two upcoming documentaries,³⁻⁴ the opportunity for consumers to make informed decisions about chiropractic is greater than ever.

But with that opportunity comes responsibility, and it starts with your practice. Every time a patient walks into your office, they are inviting you to make an impression on them. One way or another, they will walk out with an opinion. Great care translates into many positive comments, verbally and electronically, that will be heard, read and repeated for years to come. Poor care creates the opposite scenario.

Your reputation as a health care provider has gone from local to global. And while most reviews of

individual doctors of chiropractic tend to be glowing, some DCs are experiencing very poor reviews. True, you can't always please everyone, but make your best effort. A bad review can impact your professional reputation for years, costing you dearly.

More importantly, the decision of whether a person chooses chiropractic versus the medical model, including drugs, for their pain may rest on comments made by your patients. Share chiropractic in a way that will honor our profession and help people see the value of chiropractic.

References

1. "Talking Chiropractic With Dr. Phil." *Dynamic Chiropractic*, April 9, 2012.
 2. "Unprecedented Television Exposure for Chiropractic." *Dynamic Chiropractic*, May 20, 2012.
 3. "[Ready to Change the Face of Health Care.](#)" *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Sept. 9, 2012.
 4. "Pro-Chiropractic Documentary to Address Chronic Pain Crisis." *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Sept. 23, 2012
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OCTOBER 2012