

Arnold: A Tribute to Dr. Cianciulli

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Activist; scholar; practitioner; teacher; mentor; uncle; friend - these are but a few of the words I can think of to describe the late Dr. Arnold Cianciulli. Since joining the Federation for Chiropractic Education and Research (FCER),

I have been blessed with many superb colleagues and mentors; none, however, could blend the breadth, passion and everyday wisdom of Dr. Cianciulli.

To the chiropractic profession, Arnold was known for his ability to draft legislation, serving on the New Jersey State Board of Medical Examiners; American Chiropractic Association; National Chiropractic Mutual Insurance Company; the Chiropractic Alliance for Equal Access to Healthcare Organizations; the Academy for the General Practice of Chiropractic; the American Association of Health Freedom; the National Chiropractic Advisory Committee under the Clinton Administration; and FCER's own board of trustees.

To a research wonk such as myself, Arnold was a huge gateway to the real world: a man who in one breath could challenge the existing order as an iconoclast, never wavering from his appreciation and concern that my feet remain planted on the ground at all times. Wearing his native Bayonne, New Jersey, address like a badge of honor, Arnold was very much the beloved family member, with whom one could discuss anything without a hint of pretense, and receive in return advice in which one could only rejoice in its sincerity, earthiness, accuracy and humor.

My span of knowing Arnold (11 years) represents less than a sixth of his all-too-short lifetime - yet in that time, I feel I was able to grow from a neophyte (some might say "neonate") in judging the personal and political milieux of research undertakings, to one who can make and live by effective judgment calls. For this, I owe much to Arnold, who had a rare gift of seeing the overarching scope of a particular paper or proposal, and with whom I was able to spend many fortunate hours in honing my own critical skills.

In looking back at the major events that occurred in my time with FCER, I realize Arnold was a major force in many of them. Right out of the starting gate in 1992, I was alerted by Arnold about the origins of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH); after being with FCER for just two months, I ended up as chairperson of one of six founding committees of the Office of Alternative Medicine (NCCAM's predecessor). It was also with Arnold's consultation that I was able to initiate two important research competitions at FCER that led to the funding of two of our most important projects, addressing arguably the two central issues pertaining to the theory and practice of chiropractic: subluxation and primary care. The central issue here was to bring the research as close as possible to the core issues, one of Arnold's greatest strengths, which he seemed to labor tirelessly in imparting to me.

From there, Arnold and I became the first chiropractic presenters at David Eisenberg's course on alternative medicine, presented annually in Boston, primarily to medical practitioners. Before an audience of some 650 in March 1996, Arnold and I outlined the research and clinical

accomplishments of chiropractic care. I can't say we were too well-received, apparently because we introduced significant research and clinical findings in such areas as pediatric care and cervical manipulation - regarded as taboo by far too many medical practitioners (then and now).

Always looking at the big picture, Arnold was forever curious and forever searching. It was through his efforts that we met with Gerald Cilente of the Trends Research Institute in Rhinebeck, New York, and obtained a research proposal on the delivery of chiropractic services in the 21st century that was ultimately funded. The same occurred after contacting Clement Bezold of Alternative Futures, Inc., and with numerous organizers of the National Policy Dialogue to Advance Integrated Health Care; I served as a delegate at its conference in Washington, D.C., in November 2001.

It was in reviewing countless proposals and papers, however, where I experienced Arnold at his best.

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I would deconstruct any number of treatises that came through my hands, then share them with Arnold and our board; his comments were priceless. Like a close relative, he could cut to the heart of a matter in milliseconds while holding forth on anything from his successful debates with Stephen Barrett; to the hostile reception Ignatz Semmelweiss originally received from the medical community for his revolutionary thinking on the washing of hands in hospital practice;² to former NYC Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's removal of the squeegee window washers in Manhattan; to the courage of Joe Torre (arguably the most successful New York Yankees manager since Casey Stengel) - all of which brought him endless delight.

I suspect Arnold's feisty, iconoclastic nature resonated deeply with many of us. One example out of many of his writings addressed a favorite subject - the hypocrisy of Stephen Barrett and other critics of chiropractic, who he said:

"...fail miserably to recognize the daily flip-flops of allopathic medicine. One day, coffee is no good; the next, it's good. Alcohol is bad, then it's okay (in moderation). Once, table salt was forbidden in hypertension cases; now it's acceptable. Margarine was prescribed instead of butter for years; now we know the dangers of hydrogenated fats on the cardiovascular system, and its noxious role in some cancers. Must we recall the horrible aftermath of thalidomide - with its 'flipper babies' - to admit that allopathic medicine is not the science it proclaims?"

It is impossible to forget the several trips I was able to make to various places in New Jersey to visit with Arnold, which was as much like visiting a shrine or family member as it was to meet with a professional colleague. The ties that he was able to forge with such a large network of individuals at so many levels - professional and personal - were as deep as they were extensive. Who else could catch the gist of a presentation, offer convincing arguments in rebuttal, then be able to describe the fallacious portions as "BS" (the unabbreviated version of the word) and get away with it? In addition to sincerity, the personal trait that brought Arnold the most joy was to be "full of moxie," one of the best directives I have found in living day-to-day.

Arnold's grasp of human nature, research trends and the limits of our understanding, and their relations to items and locales we live with, day in and day out, was boundless. Even in his final years, when his mobility was sharply curtailed following spinal surgery, Arnold was almost never seen without a book, and had them stashed everywhere around his home. At the same time, he never lost his spirit and optimism as he sought to rehabilitate those around him - and himself - to

better health. In overcoming physical and political barriers in his lifetime, Arnold truly had the heart of a lion!

References

1. Cianciulli A. Dogma, not science. www.chiroweb.com/archives/17/12/02.html.
2. Jarvis WR. Handwashing: the Semmelweis lesson forgotten? *Lancet* 1994; 344:1311-1312 [Medline].

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