

Congratulations, Dr. Duvall ... The Final Laugh Is on You

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This afternoon, I did two things: the first was to read the recent March 24 edition of *Dynamic Chiropractic*; the second was to perform a literature search. Neither effort was particularly noteworthy, as both are common parts of my professional life, but the results were quite interesting.

On the front page of *DC*, I saw the photo of Charles DuVall Jr., DC, and the article discussing the Penn and Teller Showtime cable program, in which Dr. DuVall's now-well-known attitudes were aired. ["Penn and Teller Take Cheap Shot at Chiropractic, Alternative Medicine": www.chiroweb.com/archives/21/07/17.html] That article triggered my literature search - and some reflection.

I had a few encounters with Drs. DuVall Jr. and Sr. in the early-to-mid 1980s. DuVall Sr. used to call me on infrequent occasion at my practice in the late 70s to discuss research, back in the days when chiropractic research was more meager, and nearly anything you did (reasonable or not) attracted attention. Based on these rare communications, it seemed we shared some common concerns about the practices and behaviors of some of our colleagues.

Several years later, at one of the early North American Spine Society (NASS) meetings, I ran into the Drs. DuVall. Being one of the only two DCs to attend the inaugural and subsequent few meetings of NASS, I was excited initially to see that there were other DCs who were going to make a presentation. I arrived at the session a few minutes late, as there had been a leadership meeting of NASS in which DC membership, originally open and under consideration to be reopened, was assaulted by politics to remain closed. As I tried to enter the conference room where the DuVall Duo (DD) was presenting, I was met with a steady exodus of medical physicians. One, who knew me from earlier presentations at the inaugural meeting of NASS (then NASA ... Gee, I wonder why that changed!), asked, "Who are these guys? Are they friends of yours? There may be a place for the kind of garbage they are putting out, but it isn't here!"

When I finally got into the room, I was appalled to see the DD beaming from the stage as they played a videotape of their latest television exposé, which assassinated our profession and its members with invective, defamation and calumny. My initial response was speechlessness (a novelty for this Italian), followed rapidly by intense fury at this misguided, poorly informed and destructive activity and commentary that accomplished nothing to resolve the DD's perceived problems within the profession. When the Duo approached me afterward in the lobby, it was all I could do to hold my tongue and simply glare down at them as the escalator carried me up to my next meeting. My memory of that encounter is vivid to this day.

Since that time, it has been interesting to observe the conduct of the Duo's professional careers from a distance. I often have asked myself how any thinking person, regardless of his or her views on the conduct of some within our discipline, could be persuaded by the likes of the DuValls. (By the way, I ask that same question to a few others on the opposite end of the chiropractic diversity

spectrum.) Now, with the passing of DuVall Sr., a few years ago, the son has ascended, displaying the same arrogance and apparent absence of substantive contribution to the discipline on which he relies.

This was the set of questions for which I sought answers in the literature and my recollections:

- What substantive contribution has been made by the decades of behavior demonstrated by Dr. DuVall Jr.?
- Do any thought-provoking writings exist? Are there any pieces of scientific investigation aimed to answer any substantive question critical to the care of patients? Is there a policy matter that has been elucidated, explored, explained or challenged?
- Where has DuVall Jr., contributed anything to try to solve the questions and quandaries (scientific, clinical or political) that drive the defensive and survival behaviors of some to which he expresses objection?
- What are the breakthroughs of patient care and quality of life for which he has fought to improve?
- Where does he provide evidence that his attitudes have substantive basis, and where has he offered a hand to elevate his colleagues and profession for the betterment of care outcomes?

The answer is ... there are none that I could find. Not a single piece of evidence exists to suggest DuVall Jr., has made any such contributions. As I reviewed the history of the past 20-plus years for anything else, I came to understand that he did serve in the U.S. military - laudable, but then again, so did the Oklahoma Murrah Building bomber.

Some people go through life and have little they can look back on and say, "I helped make a positive change. " Congratulations, Dr. DuVall. You now have flirted with satirists in the performance with Penn and Teller; a new notch for your belt. There is so much constructive work that needs to be done in our profession; perhaps it will never occur to you that the final laugh is on you.

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