

Unprecedented Response

Christopher Malter

A new movement is quickly gaining momentum throughout the chiropractic industry and among the general public, demanding that the industry establish a more defined public-relations, marketing and advertising program.

A Demand for Change

Forged from an overwhelming response to my article, "If You Want Change, Read This," in the May 5 issue [www.chiroweb.com/archives/21/10/11.html], I created Friends For Chiropractic (FFC), dedicated to changing the image and perception of the chiropractic industry in the eyes of all Americans. To date, I've received hundreds of phone calls, e-mail and faxes from doctors, businesses and the general public demanding that the perception of chiropractic be changed. I have never seen an industry so blatantly disregard the deployment of a sophisticated public-relations and marketing program while its doctors, patients, vendors and the general public demand it.

FFC is a coalition of doctors, patients, businesses and the general public committed to ensuring every American is afforded the freedom to choose chiropractic care. It is dedicated to proactively communicating the values and benefits of this viable, primary source of health care by assembling people from all walks of life to educate the world about chiropractic.

This grassroots movement calls for all doctors to rise up and demand that their state associations support them locally, from a public-relations perspective, and it demands systemic changes. No longer should students of chiropractic be taught 20th-century marketing techniques. No longer should industry "marketing gurus" advocate placing a value on chiropractic services.

Elliott Grusky, a South Florida, chiropractor who works with the Hurricanes football team at the University of Miami, wonders, "Why don't we have chiropractic or health-care reporters affiliated with national, regional and local print and broadcast media outlets? Why don't we have a network of spokespersons geographically located throughout the country who can speak with the media at the drop of a hat on chiropractic issues, health-care issues, etc.?"

Chiropractic: Missing in Action

Throughout the recent military conflict with Iraq, CNN's medical correspondent routinely filed stories on biological and chemical weapons. Was it important for a medical doctor to do the reporting? No - but in the eyes of the American public, it made sense and further validate conventional medicine's worth. Good job, AMA!

"This is not just a few doctors with a mission. FFC consists of thousands of doctors throughout the U.S. who are committed to bringing change to the chiropractic industry," says J.C. Smith, a practitioner in Warner Robins, Ga., tasked by the ACA to analyze the use and need of public relations. "When ACA President Dr. Daryl Wills appointed me to its new public-relations ad hoc committee, I realized it was a daunting challenge that I was thoroughly unprepared to handle. After all, I'm a chiropractor, not a PR professional. After one rather unproductive conference call, it

was obvious to me that none of the committee members were prepared to deal with this issue other than to admit the chiropractic profession desperately needs positive PR."

Ironically, all the legal battles in the world will never win the war of perception and public opinion of chiropractic. However, an effective public-relations, marketing and advertising campaign that proactively pursues media opportunities, inside and outside the chiropractic industry, will support all legal efforts and influence perception.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Communication is the essence of power; yet as an industry, we are failing to convey a clear and concise message to the general public. If you are like the thousands of doctors who hear their cries for change fall on deaf ears, FFC needs your help. Its mantra is simple: Proactively communicate the benefits of chiropractic; preach the word, then rally the troops.

FFC is accepting no money - just people: leaders who are passionate about changing the way Americans view chiropractic. We want individuals who are ready to change an industry. Together, we can do it.

Those interested in FFC are advised to contact me at any of the phone numbers or the e-mail address below.

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