

United We Stand, Divided We Fall

Kent Greenawalt

My goal in this column is to provide various points of view from people in chiropractic who have a reputation for being knowledgeable, but most of all, for caring and helping our profession to be everything it can be. In this issue, I have invited Larry Markson, DC, to give his viewpoint on unity. I have known him for more than 20 years, and I know his heart is in the right place - so please read and enjoy!

Republican? Democrat? Independent? So-called "straight" (subluxation-based only) practitioner? "Mixer" (a subluxation-based practitioner who uses adjunctive therapy and sees a bit broader scope)? Palmer; Parker; Cleveland; New York; Logan; or Life graduate? Activator; SOT; diversified; network; or kinesiology technique? It makes little difference!

No one cares but us! If you are a DC, these are arduous times in the evolution of our wonderful profession, and despite legislative victories here and there, and a once-in-a-while win in our "too little, too slow" PR campaign, we still only adjust approximately 30 million people per year. In addition, we still have to fight for our rights every day in government, with third-party payers, and worse yet, with an uninformed public that still doesn't know or could't care less about who we are and what we do. It is intolerable that after 108 years, chiropractic has not yet earned the trust of the public!

Great damage has been done, and sadly, the internal "wars" within our profession have had an unintentionally negative influence on public opinion, contributing to the "stale" state of chiropractic in 2003. After more than a century of clawing and scratching our way, the media is still not our "friend," and the public and governmental bodies remain thoroughly confused about what to do with us. Why?

Because our profession is still confused, it confuses those we should be positively influencing. Our three national organizations, the ACA, ICA and WCA, collectively have only about 12,000 dues-paying members (out of approximately 66,000 DCs in the U.S.), and each speak out in single voices, saying whatever they want, with little thought as to the negative impact and confusion they might be causing. Their rhetoric sways no one in our profession and surely doesn't help us in the outside world. We hear them, but their way is neither working nor effective, and it is certainly not getting the job done. Our politics are holding us back.

Needed Right Now - A New Chiropractic Initiative!

Here is my proposal for a new chiropractic initiative:

1. We need an immediate call for unity - all U.S. chiropractors should flood our national organizations with a mandate for unity. (And that doesn't mean merger; it means a unification of efforts and actions.
2. Organizations must meet urgently - not to battle over differences, for a change - but to unite based on the things we can agree on and give chiropractic one clear voice on our behalf. The first thing on the agenda must be the immediate formation of one united national committee for chiropractic! That agenda also should provide for the appointment of a working

chiropractic congress, which would include dignitaries and leaders that are non-politically aligned and represent every chiropractor.

3. A united national committee should be charged with the responsibility of setting standards that include, yet allow for, our differences in approach to the removal of subluxation and nerve interference.
4. Committee standards should include the following:
 1. guidelines for true professionalism and ethical practice, which each of us would be pledged to uphold; and
 2. constant and never-ending performance analysis research on clinical results and patient satisfaction.
5. Every DC in the U.S. must contribute to one united national committee! The amount need not be large, provided we all support this new committee, vocally, with action and involvement.
6. There should be an immediate review to determine if more effective activist programs are necessary to make our voice heard on all government levels - in legislative planning, and certainly with regard to our public relations.
7. We need to search out and find one powerful, articulate, "in-the-know," charismatic spokesperson who can represent us actively in all matters of concern to the government, insurance industry and public.
8. Infusion of capital through a national fundraising campaign (run by professional fundraisers) should be urgently considered. We need to fund our own future now! If it takes money to wake the world up, let's get it!
9. An educational program aimed at our own profession is essential. We must call on all chiropractic publications to back our ideals and help us emphasize the critical importance of unity. They could help define the specific benefits and need for supporting this united effort.
10. We need a worldwide identity through a PR program that should proudly proclaim chiropractic's differences from traditional medical care and the other healing arts. Programs should be launched now to create positive awareness about the benefits of the care we provide.

These changes are needed for two reasons: First, if we expect to be treated as an integral part of the health-care delivery system of America's future - not as outsiders or "alternative" health-care providers - we need to sing the same song to everyone who will listen.

Second, disunity leads to self-destruction! We squabble among ourselves while our "enemies," armed with muscle, clout and their own unity, pick us off one by one!

This march to nowhere must stop! There can no longer be room for practitioners, who - whatever their beliefs - put themselves ahead of the rest of us. Not all psychiatrists are Freudian practitioners, but all credible psychiatrists are committed to educational and practice standards that define the practice of psychiatry. We need to do the same. We need to clearly define chiropractic, and now is the time!

What are our options? We can keep things the same, and allow far too many of our colleagues to suffer in the marketplace, or we can come together on behalf of our profession and all the dramatic achievements we have accomplished over the last century. Today, more than ever before, we are blessed with people capable of making positive changes. If we do not take the initiative now, it will not be because we do not know what must be done!

Every chiropractor must stand and be counted. We must choose a unified profession. We must maintain our professional identity. Let's do it right now!

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