

It's OK to Care

Kent Greenawalt

with guest author Mark Sanna, DC

In keeping with my goal to provide various perspectives from individuals who are knowledgeable - and more importantly - genuinely concerned for us - I have asked Mark Sanna, a second-generation chiropractor and the CEO of Breakthrough Coaching, to write the following article. It's all about caring!

I am grateful both for the opportunity to address my colleagues in this forum of unity, and for the example Mr. Greenawalt sets for our profession. As colleagues, we learn together, share our experiences, argue, challenge and support one other - all the things we are supposed to do. We are in this profession together despite our varied views on practice, scopes of practice, medicolegal issues and chiropractic's future. This is normal and good. I look forward to many more years of the support and challenges I enjoy from my colleagues. It keeps me sharp, caring, and makes me know I am part of a profession that is alive with energy. It's not unlike the way the fathers of our country argued and tugged at each other while they imagined how to rightly define the United States.

A study by the Rand Corporation published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* was reported in *The Wall Street Journal* recently. It stated that chiropractic is not as effective for low back pain as it was once thought to be. One of the study's co-authors, Paul G. Shekelle, MD, PhD, directly implied that chiropractors' feelings were hurt by the study. Of course, when we enter the realm of hurt feelings (which is so frequent in our professional world), it can cause all kinds of unpredictable reactions and knock away any semblance of unity we might have.

Every now and then, research comes out that attempts to discredit chiropractic as a profession or chiropractors as professionals. When this happens, medical doctors, medical researchers and chiropractic naysayers point their fingers at us with humorous disdain, chiding us because our feelings are hurt.

We can use cases such as these as calls for unity. Join me for a moment to reflect on the fact that there is something between the lines that suggests it is shameful to have hurt feelings.

I'll let you in on something: I have had the great privilege of getting to know hundreds of famous (and not-so-famous) chiropractors around the world, and by and large, chiropractors' feelings do get hurt when they hear something bad said about chiropractic. No, it is not out of concern that our profession will fold. As the world is finding out, chiropractic is here to stay. Our feelings get hurt from the insult, just as anyone's feelings are hurt when someone besmirches their family name. What's funny is that some chiropractors have confided in me that they are embarrassed by the fact that they care enough about their profession to have hurt feelings.

How many of you feel a pinch of shame or embarrassment when someone makes fun of chiropractic? It doesn't feel good when someone makes fun of you or criticizes what you love, does it? Why do we feel shame or embarrassment? We want chiropractic to be scientific, and when it is proven that we are missing some of the science, we feel inadequate: "How can I call myself a

doctor?"

Feeling inadequate is natural for everyone at times, especially to those who care deeply about their profession, as we do. This is why chiropractic has lasted so long in such a hostile, bully-ridden environment. We are committed to learning the science behind what we do and learning more about why it works.

Many of my teachers were around when chiropractic officially began in the U.S., and they knew that the science was coming. They had passion and inspiration. With that came a commitment. They were willing to admit to their passion more than we are now. The truth is that we are passionate and inspired about what we do and what this profession has to offer the world. It is this passion and inspiration that drives us to emote. We emote because we care. We care about our science and our art, and because we care, we express that caring - sometimes as pain. Sometimes we whine and sometimes we are crybabies. Who cares? It doesn't make us worse doctors or less scientific, it just makes us human; it makes us real.

Take a look at who is pointing their fingers at us. They are members of a profession that doesn't care! They make fun of what they lack. Think about this: If we were practicing medicine and our profession was earmarked by the U.S. State Department as among the top causes of death in the country, we'd be upset. Depending on the year, medical care is ranked as the second to sixth cause of death in the United States - yet it is considered "scientific."

Do you realize medical doctors keep prescribing drugs with self-righteous numbness because somewhere, a scientific paper said it was OK to do so? The medical profession is either robotic or has been whipped into submission by something we don't understand. It doesn't or can't emote. Let me clarify: This is not true for all MDs, but it does apply globally to the power they represent. I have met and spoken with hundreds of MDs who yearn to do something more meaningful than just be part of the "medical machine"; they are disenchanted and disheartened. One MD said to me recently, "I just wanted to be a doctor to take care of patients. I didn't count on all these complications." I also have noticed that when asked, MDs want to share their feelings about their profession with chiropractors.

So, the answer is: Yes, we care, and it's not only OK to care in our profession - it's great! Sometimes, we express it in ways we would rather not; and sometimes, we just sound silly. OK - we are not jaded. We can get better. Let's learn from that. First of all, let's be willing to do it and know we will get better at expressing ourselves and that it's OK to care.

Here's the good part: Knowing we care, we can choose how to do it. Let's choose to express how we care better. So, how can we harness the fact that we care about our profession and make that work for us? How can we better express ourselves as scientists and humanitarians? Are we willing to take the science under our belts and not make the same mistakes we have watched the medical profession make? This is our challenge. Science will catch up with the practical side of chiropractic. Are we ready for it? Are you? Will we be able to retain what has made us unique for so long?

I ask you to join me in an oath - to channel your caring into ways that we will be proud of in the next 100 years. Will you make an oath to keep caring and not submit to the tug of contrived professionalism medicine has embraced in its health care paradigm? That paradigm is dying, if it is not dead already. Chiropractic is leading the way to a new form of health care. Don't you want your family to have all kinds of doctors who do care; are passionate and inspired about their profession; express their disappointment appropriately; and engage in human communication with the public and with the patients?

Chiropractic is a great profession. We have so much to give. It is wonderful to live in such a critical time when what we say and do actually makes a difference! We are at the forefront of the health care revolution. We are creating the future of health care. It's hard to see it when you live it, but believe me when I tell you that you are going to make a difference. Your patients love you because you help them and you are part of a profession that is real. They want to see you because you care. As you care, your patients will care. I invite you to join me in teaching your patients how caring can change the lives of their children and of children of generations to come.

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