

## Secrets From the Drug World

Kent Greenawalt

with guest author Frank Corbo, DC

Unity: My goal in this column is to provide various points of view from people in chiropractic who have a reputation for being knowledgeable and wise - and more importantly, for caring and helping our profession be everything we can be. In this issue, I have invited Dr. Frank Corbo to give his viewpoint on unity. Please read and enjoy!

### *Memorandum*

From the Desk of:

Mr. Joseph V'iox

Marketing Director

RE: Quarterly Report/Review

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your concern for our cause. I did get your report. Great job! Numbers look outstanding once again. Regarding your concern about them uniting, don't sweat it; I don't think it will ever happen. I agree with you though, if they did unite, we'd be in a heap of trouble.

As a matter of fact, if I were a betting man, I'd put my money on the fact that they'll never unite. Look at them, Jack. All they do is bicker, complain and stab each other in the back. In fact, they fight more than our guys do. And you know the best part about it? They can't stop airing their dirty laundry in public! We couldn't have planned it any better!

I agree with your take on their annual convention this year in Las Vegas. They definitely got my attention! Truth be told, they really had me a bit concerned - I actually broke a sweat! All that talk about unity. I thought they might really get somewhere with it this time. But true to their history, once the emotions of Vegas wore off - back they went, rallying their troops and shooting in! Did you get my memo on how they're handling the Medicare bill? They're like cats and dogs. They can hardly agree on anything. Don't you just love it?

You know, if it weren't for their patients, and their dedication to their "doctors," they'd be done by now. In fact, if they actually ever focused on sending one message to the public, they'd be dangerous.

Your last point about "hitting them with all we've got" over the years hit home with me, Jack. They have been pretty resilient.

So, with that in mind, here are my recommendations for your department:

- Keep the heat on them.
- Go back to what works - keep them from focusing on their patients.
- Hit them hard in the media.
- Get more negative publicity on them.

Call me if you need an increase in your budget. As you know, money is never a problem.

Sincerely,

*Joseph V'iox*

PS: Thank Steve for the "Today Show" piece ... ingenious. Great work!

My goal in reprinting this fictitious memo is to prompt you to see how our profession may be perceived (We are the "they" referred to in the letter!), and also to tell you that we are facing a very real battle with a truly formidable foe. The pharmaceutical industry, with which I have been intimately involved, has extremely deep pockets. It will not part with its piece of the pie that easily.

There's too much at stake for it to lose. It won't hesitate to pour billions upon billions of dollars into marketing and advertising campaigns, and if you simply look at the results - distancing yourself from the fact they sell drugs - you'll see that their plans are working in near-flawless fashion.

How formidable is our foe? As I mentioned previously, I've seen the pharmaceutical industry from the inside out. Without getting into details, let me share this one fact that gets the point across. Its budget for marketing and advertising in one year (and this was almost 15 years ago) was more than the chiropractic profession's public relations and marketing campaign budget in our entire 108-year history! Because of this economic fact, we are challenged even more to rally and unite as a profession. Make no mistake: This is indeed a battle, and we are the underdogs.

Here's a review from my file on attention deficit disorder. I've included it to show you the lengths to which they (In this case, "they" means the pharmaceutical moguls.) will go to in order to increase their market penetration. Reading this will change your life.

The Fleecing of America's Children: A Conspiracy?

Am I going overboard? I honestly don't think so. This excerpt from an article in the *Chicago Sun-Times* that brought me to tears:<sup>1</sup>

**Some Infants Get Medication Despite Advice of Experts**

Nobody knows what long-term damage drugs such as Ritalin can do to the fast-growing brain of a small child. For that reason alone, federal regulators and pharmaceutical companies don't recommend giving these drugs to children under six. That hasn't stopped some local doctors. A *Sun-Times* analysis of prescriptions written in the Chicago area over 18 months reveals 4,145 prescriptions for Ritalin in children under five.

Of those prescriptions, 53 were written for infants who had not yet reached their first birthday!

This is why we need to unite: not because of us and our professional needs and aspirations, but because of the people worldwide besieged and duped into a life of sickness care. When I said their marketing plan was almost flawless? Here's what I meant: The cracks are beginning to show, as indicated in this review of a recent *Los Angeles Times* article regarding the pharmaceutical industry:

There's Hope on the Horizon!

- After years of basking in the glow of huge profits and a sterling public image, big brand-name drug companies are reeling from attacks by senior citizen groups, state and federal regulators.
- "Clearly there has been a lot of upheaval and uncertainty in the industry right now," said Merck and Co., Inc. Chairman, Raymond V. Gilmartin.
- The \$400 billion industry is in for a lengthy period of turmoil and change.
- "On the revenue side, they're likely to get kicked in the shin. And on the product side, the well has run dry," said Uwe Reinhardt, a Princeton University professor and expert on health care policy. "It is not an easy future."
- The public is highly suspicious of the pricing controversies. In fact, a poll revealed that price gouging was cited most often by consumers when asked why they thought health-care cost were escalating.

Now, I'm not saying the entire drug industry is about to crumble, but it does appear that things are beginning to teeter a bit. (Remember: No one ever thought Rome would fall!) As Paul Zane Pilzer, economist and author of the bestseller *The Wellness Revolution* said, "Chiropractic is positioned to

emerge as the leader in the wellness industry."

This guy knows his stuff. He's on the cutting edge of economy, finances, and health care. He writes public policy! Listen to him; he cautions us by saying that we need to get our act together now or we're at risk of someone else taking over the wellness industry. And if you don't think he's serious - did you listen to or read about the segment of the Sept. 24 "Today in New York" program on WNBC-TV, regarding manipulation for treating ear infections?<sup>2</sup> You would find Mr. Pilzer's words almost prophetic!

In the words of Calif. Congressman Ed Royce: "At best, your influence is diminished; at worst, your message sends mixed signals ... your challenge is difficult enough without having to battle yourselves through legislative arenas."

This brings to mind three important points:

- We are a family - a dysfunctional family, but a family nonetheless. All families have their disagreements. This is not inherently bad. In fact, our greatest growth can take place here.
- Before you criticize another chiropractor, look yourself in the mirror. Ask yourself, "If I were the only one in chiropractic doing something for this profession, where would our profession be?"
- If we doubled the amount of patients choosing chiropractic care, I guarantee the bickering would stop. We'd all be too busy to occupy ourselves with such trivial things.

On behalf of billions of people worldwide, please take the time to restore broken relationships inside the chiropractic arena. I know of several that need restoration. Take those first steps - don't delay. Remember that each day we wait, our adversaries get a deeper foothold on us. Recall the research on the infants - not even able to walk - taking Ritalin! We cannot let stuff like that continue. But, unfortunately, it will, if we don't stand up - as a profession - and say, "Enough is enough!" Draw a line in the sand and stand united, shoulder-to-shoulder. If we don't create a united front, ask yourself the question, "Who will?" Scary thought, isn't it?

It appears that we need to gather together all the leaders of this great profession in one room, lock the doors, and stay there until we decide who we are as a profession and where we're steering this ship. On the way in, we must check our pride, personalities and precious chiropractic ideologies at the door, roll up our sleeves and get to work on what we all agree on - caring for the well-being of all people.

### *References*

1. Skertic M. Ritalin roulette: Some infants get medication despite advice of experts. *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 21, 2002. [www.suntimes.com/special\\_sections/ritalin/cst-nws-ritage21.html](http://www.suntimes.com/special_sections/ritalin/cst-nws-ritage21.html).
2. There is a link to a related article on this and a letter describing the segment at [www.amerchiro.org/media/record/wnbc\\_tv.shtml](http://www.amerchiro.org/media/record/wnbc_tv.shtml).

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