

Wellness Care and Chiropractic

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Editor's note: Dynamic Chiropractic is pleased to welcome Guy Riekeman, DC, as a distinguished columnist.

Dr. Riekeman is a noted lecturer, philosopher, and founder of the Renaissance and Quest management systems. You'll recall the many articles in DC on the Chiropractic Centennial documentary "From Simple Beginnings." Dr. Riekeman wrote, produced and directed that excellent documentary which brought chiropractic to a national television audience.

A 1972 graduate from Palmer College of Chiropractic, Dr. Riekeman is currently director of the Palmer Institute for Professional Advancement.

When Don Petersen asked me to write a piece for *Dynamic Chiropractic* on a regular basis, I was ecstatic. I can't think of a better way to reach the tens of thousands of chiropractors across the globe and inform them of what is happening in the profession. In the many years I have been out lecturing and practicing, I have seen a change in the way patients and chiropractors are viewing the profession.

This corner will be about those changes and the social, political, and practical aspects of chiropractic. I will also discuss the ramifications of differing views of the aforementioned for the individual doctor and profession as a whole. Together, we will come to decisions about where chiropractic and our lives are headed based on rationale we already know and evidence that is unfolding, in the hopes of allowing chiropractors and chiropractic to be more successful.

So with that brief introduction, let us begin with what is the most vital and far-reaching topic concerning chiropractic today. That topic is wellness care; our survival and success for the future will probably depend on it. The concept of wellness care has for years been misunderstood and ill-defined by many, including the drug companies that are stealing it for their own benefit. To clarify some of these misconceptions, let us first discuss what wellness care is to me.

We begin with the knowledge that much of the internal conflict we have within our own profession, and even the conflict we have with our medical counterparts stem from this misuse of wellness care. As chiropractors, we need to remind ourselves of the mission we have for chiropractic. Is it to spread the idea that we are neck and back specialists, or is it to bring to the table the big idea? What is the big idea? We will cover that in a future article, but for now, let me suggest the big idea is where we need to concentrate and that means focusing our clinical efforts on the vertebral subluxation complex (VSC).

Let's start by examining the relationship between VSC and the three types of care available to patients: initial intensive care, health care and wellness care. Initial intensive care or symptom care is designed to reduce the discomfort or pain associated with a particular disease or condition. Responses to this include adjusting for relief and often medicinal and other non-drug therapies. This is the area of

chiropractic, especially neck and back pain care that medical practitioners are now trying to incorporate into their practices and where many of the conflicts arise in our own profession: the ICA/ACA rift; vitalism versus mechanism; adjusting only or use of therapies, etc.

The next phase is health care, which is often referred to by patients as preventative care. Health care goes beyond getting rid of symptoms or disease. It is about having enough health so that these problems don't return, and to maintain optimal physical, mental and spiritual well-being. For chiropractors, this translates into the nonsymptomatic correction of the vertebral subluxation complex and awareness of the five components of VSC.

The final and most important part of this paradigm is wellness care. I am of the opinion that life is far more than just getting rid of or preventing disease. Life is a process of growth and development that changes from one day to the next. Physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and in our relationships, we are different than we were at age two (and even yesterday, for that matter). The process of life, the human experience, is one of maximal growth and development in each of these areas. We need to be prepared to design and develop our lives fully. This is wellness care.

Chiropractic has always addressed these issues and is the only organized profession with a philosophy capable of carrying wellness care to the world. What does this mean in terms of individual success in practice? What about patient education? Should our clinical care only focus on patient demands for back pain? Is it our responsibility to redefine our health care system? Have our national organizations become obsolete? These questions and more will be addressed in upcoming columns. I look forward to exploring these with you.

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