

## Rights vs. Responsibilities

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H.G. Wells once wrote to Gandhi requesting an endorsement for a piece he had written on human rights. Gandhi rejected the opportunity, saying he was not committed to human rights. Astounded, Wells wanted to know for what purpose Gandhi had spent his life in social protest. Gandhi's response: human responsibility. Any group that demands its rights does so at the loss of the rights of some other group or social structure. Soon, an organization or society will be torn apart and destroyed as each person fights for their rights. Gandhi commented that whatever rights we enjoy should be the result of the responsibilities we've committed to.

In the 70s and 80s, we came to assume it was our right to have third-party pay in ever-increasing amounts. When this ended, we were basically indignant that insurance companies had stopped paying us "our money." I'm not defending insurance companies, but in the last decade of this ongoing discussion I have rarely heard chiropractors discussing our responsibilities to such issues as integrity, communication and honest education of the health care industry.

Similarly, since my involvement with Palmer, I get letters admonishing the school regarding everything from fundraising to its philosophy curriculum; most recently from a doctor who admitted he had not been back to Palmer for decades and had given his financial support to another college. Does not the right to demand changes carry with it first the responsibility to be involved? Conversely, Palmer must fulfill its educational and historical responsibility if it is to expect the right to have chiropractors support the Fountainhead. But in both cases, the discussion must be centered on responsibilities, not rights.

For example, a chiropractic diploma does not give you the right to be successful, only the opportunity to be responsible for people's care and, from fulfilling that responsibility, the chance to build success. Physical therapists are now demanding the right to manipulate (see "The Right to Manipulate" in the September 7th issue of DC), and our profession is again put in jeopardy. Yet in 1995 at the Washington centennial, there were approximately 2,000 chiropractors. At the PT's annual convention a week later, there were 8,000 attendees. If, like the early pioneers of chiropractic, we are going to have the right to exist as a profession, then we must accept the responsibility to:

- be active and involved, even in times of economic crisis;
- be a member of a national and state association that best represents our philosophy and goals;
- educate our patients and community;
- support a chiropractic college;

- become lifelong learners;
- and most of all, have a vision for our profession that goes beyond our own individual success and short-term benefits: a vision that moves health care from disease treatment to health and wellness; a vision that allows chiropractic to evolve as a unique philosophy and science; and a vision that puts patients first.

If we can accept and honor these responsibilities, then we will not only gain the right to exist, but the right to succeed, the right to be leaders, and the right to be right.

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