

The Saga of Vitalism Continues: Support Arrives from All over the World and from Surprising Sources (Part III)

Editor's note: Part I of Dr. Curl's "Vitalism" series was published in *DC* November 11, 1996; Part II, December 16, 1996.

"You have to move through science to get to vitalism."

In my last series of articles I pointed out that the chiropractic profession needs a better understanding of vitalism and its role in chiropractic. From this opening salvo, I challenged my fellow clinicians, college administrators, curriculum planners and educators to openly discuss vitalism and explore ways to teach its use in the clinical setting. The challenge was declared. Many responded. I believe the *DC* readers will find the following two letters particularly fun to read.

The first letter arrives from the great state of Texas. Dr. Moore writes, "Like you, I'll be really excited when all of us (educators and field doctors) start teaching vitalism again (I'm guilty). The time to embrace vitalism is now. As some chiropractors struggle to be mechanistic physicians, they fail to see that health care is rapidly moving away from mechanistic reductionism to vitalism. We may be fighting to take the hill only to find the enemy warming their hands at their own campfires. When I was a chiropractic student, I saw my education in basic sciences as a necessary precursor to utilizing chiropractic philosophy. Over the years this idea keeps drifting in and out of my mind, but I've never been able to express it clearly until now: you have to move through science to get to vitalism."

Dr. Moore leaves with this quote to consider: "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened." -- Winston Churchill.

The second letter comes from Loma Linda, California, the community of the renowned Loma Linda Medical University. Dr. NC writes of modern-day chiropractic and vitalism. He firmly states that vitalism is a key component of chiropractic, but adds that it, and innate intelligence, are poorly understood by most of the profession. He reminds us that chiropractic is one of the few approaches that continues to incorporate a vitalistic component in that it recognizes the nonmaterial aspect of the human organism. This, he reasons, is what makes chiropractic unique and valuable to the public.

In parting, Dr. NC offers these definitions for us to ponder.

"The doctrine that the processes of life are not explicable by the laws of physics and chemistry alone, and that life is in some part of self-determining." -- Webster's Dictionary

Innate intelligence or inborn organization: "The term used by chiropractors to acknowledge the fact that there is an inherent striving of every cell and part of the organism to maintain itself in the most optimum state possible, barring limitations to its matter."

Vertebral subluxation: "Loss of relationship between bones of the spine, altering the shape of neural passages, impinging on nerve tissue, interfering with the transmission of mental impulses."

I find it interesting to point out that no one who has responded to this challenge has taken the position against the use of vitalism in chiropractic! Perhaps there is a message here?

With each article I encourage you to write the questions you may have, commentaries on patient care, or thoughts to share with your colleagues, to me at the following address.

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FEBRUARY 1997